

MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE

(No. 24. NEW SERIES, OCTOBER, 1907)

THE WANDERINGS OF AMBROSE

CHAPTER X

I FOUND that Tammy's visit had coincided very happily with mine. I was able to slip away unnoticed in the mornings,—leaving him and Lady Merivale pasting photographs into a book—across to her bungalow. It was a very tiny bungalow, with a deep thatched roof sloping all round, and innumerable creamy roses trailing up the broad verandah. Here we sat, she hemming curtains, and I teasing the squirrels that through mistaken kindness and pampering on her part had become overbold. Outside reigned supreme a glorius sunshine and a cloudless sky. I don't wonder that people in India are accused of being frivolous. How could anyone be serious in such a gorgeous atmosphere, amid such a profusion of roses and flowers and golden colourings? Clearly the East is meant for trifling; for idling on cushions in pillared halls, where the breeze faintly fans, and the sunlight steals in patches, subdued, unglaring; and the sky shows cobalt against the marble tracery. The ordinary routine of life has no business here; it cannot fail to destroy the illusion, disperse the glamour.

She took me to the Taj herself in her brother Tip's dogcart. I liked Tip. He was a straightforward, manly, young Briton, whose devotion to his sister was only exceeded by his devotion to his career. I do not know how many luxuries he must have foregone, if not necessities, to purchase the cart and pony that took us to the Taj; but he was determined that, so far as it lay in his power, his sister should not suffer from the poverty with which they had had to struggle all their lives. He was rarely visible, being hard at work studying for examinations, some of them obligatory, some of them, as she told me with tears in her eyes, in order that he might get on, might get appointments

with which to make life easier for her. Poor Tip! did he think then to keep her so long? As I looked at her, I wondered how soon such beauty would attract suitors, wondered jealously, though I tried to pretend I was merely curious. What right had I, who was more or less bound, to speculate on her fate? It had never occurred to me to doubt that I should some day marry Nancy. I had marked her out as the one wife in the world for me years ago. In marrying her there would be no surprise. She would be pretty always, amusing always; other men would no doubt want to flirt with her; in time she would assist nature's paint with a little rouge, artistically of course; the naïve wit, for which she was so much admired, would ripen too; Nancy would like to hear risky stories probably, and she would thoroughly enjoy repeating them all wrong; she would always be a charming hostess, with winning ways and a fascinating smile. But was there not more in lifelong companionship than a smile and a repartee? For the first time in my existence I was conscious of a yearning for something other than the usual society chatter, a something that struck deeper, that went indeed straight to the roots of existence itself. I need never expect anything of the sort from Nancy. I had trained myself to believe I should not require it, that a woman with thoughts other than of dress and entertaining would bore me. I knew now it was not so. I had drifted on to an unknown sea, and I found the strange depths of it inexpressibly fascinating. As though in answer to my thoughts, perhaps because of my thoughts, Maud said suddenly, "I shall never marry."

We had wandered down the cypress pathway to the Taj. Behind us, all dull crimson stone, lay the massive gateway; before us, the immortal tomb, all white marble, rose like a prayer to purity out of the peace of its surroundings. Stately watch-towers, the four minarets at each corner kept guard, rearing themselves slenderly against the brilliant foliage and the dazzling sky. Born of love out of an age of turbulency, commanded of royalty in an age of imagination, the Taj seemed more of heaven than of earth in the perfection of its ideal. We went up the steps reverently. Though the artist-mind had designed it, the artist-mind could never hope to realise the atmosphere surrounding it. Only on the terrace beyond, the river flowing beneath, and the fort, red and glowing, standing out boldly in the distance, could impressions be seized. In these winter afternoons the sun sets early. Already it was aflame

behind the palaces and mosques where Shah Jehan lived as an emperor, and where as a prisoner he died. Maud seated herself on the broad parapet, her head turned slightly from me, her white dress harmonising with the exquisite grace of her surroundings; and there as she sat I sketched her, the marble of the Taj glimmering all round her, the setting sun reflecting in the water beneath her the grim outlines of the fort frowning beyond.

"You will change that opinion presently," I remarked, not without some heart-burnings.

She shook her head. "Not in India, and," she laughed, "I am not likely to have a chance elsewhere."

"Why not in India?" I asked, busy with my brush.

Maud looked serious. "Isn't everything rather artificial out here?" she remarked.

"That is a broad statement," I said, washing in my back-ground.

"What I mean is, I am always either dressing for a tennis-party, or going out to dinner or a dance."

"I have known such a state of things," I said, "exist even in London."

"In London,—yes; but then in London gaiety is not the aim and end of existence."

"Isn't it?" I asked surprised; "then perhaps I have been misinformed."

She looked down at my sketch. "One needs a background," she said; "one wants light and shadow."

"Would you kindly," I suggested, "turn your head back again? Thank you very much. Most people, I believe, would tell you that they could do without shadow."

"Too much light becomes blinding," said Maud, "morally blinding. Don't you think so?"

"I have not," I said, "thought on the matter at all. I am very fond of the gloaming myself. Perhaps it is that you miss in India?"

"I miss," she said, "an objective. I cannot hem curtains for ever. What am I to do with myself?" She threw out her arms with a dramatic gesture.

I begged to remind her of her pose. "Make cakes," I suggested, being unable to think of anything else.

"The cook makes them better than I can ever hope to do, and uses fewer eggs."

"Dresses," I murmured, having a dim recollection of my sisters' occasional efforts in that line.

"I have got enough for the present, and I mustn't be extravagant."

"Music." I was painting her profile and every stroke was inspired.

She sighed ever so faintly. "I haven't got a piano."

"Couldn't you," I asked, more for the sake of preserving her expression, than because I meant a word of what I was saying, "couldn't you convert little black boys?"

"Tip wouldn't let me. I insisted on a Christian butler when I arrived, and he got drunk the first night."

Missionary work seemed unpopular. "I am at the end of my resources," I remarked.

"Tip," pursued his sister, gazing at the distant fort, "works hard all day and half the night. I ride in the morning. Then I struggle with the cook. Then I——"

"Hem curtains," I suggested.

Maud blushed. "In the afternoon I read and grow drowsy. Then I dress——."

"To come to the Taj," I hazarded.

Maud blushed more deeply still. "Afterwards I go to the Club."

"Not to-night, certainly not to-night," I said with energy.

The light was fast waning. I finished my sketch as quickly as I could and packed it up. Maud suddenly touched me on the sleeve. "Look," she said. The peerless Indian moon was already riding high in the sky. The mantle of Indian darkness was closing in upon us. We sat side by side and watched the silvery radiance grow brighter and brighter until the Taj was bathed in its light. Indefinite shadows seemed to steal up all round us; the trees looked black against the brilliance of the night; only the terrace on which we sat and the marble domes of the tomb itself caught the full glamour of the moon. In such a celestial setting the Taj seemed the very consecration of love to poetry.

"I am glad," I said, "that I have seen this with you. I think I never want to see it again."

Two figures came up towards us out of the dusk. Somehow it seemed like fate that Tammy's voice should break the spell. "Fine sight, isn't it?" he said. We left him and the General's wife in full possession of the moonlight, and retraced our steps to the gateway. But the charm was gone. We, who had been

so near heaven, were brought suddenly to earth again. The cypresses were melancholy, the splash of the water in the marble basins monotonous even to sadness. By common consent we hurried out of the gateway and neither turned to look back. I had seen the Taj for the first and last time.

We drove to the Club after all. What else is to be done with the lingering hours in India between the afternoon's occupation and the evening's amusement? Lady Merivale joined us there and I accompanied her home. I suppose I am a coward, but far sooner than I intended I cut my visit to Agra short. Ramzan, I said, was ruining me. Half the contents of the bazaar were ranged daily in the verandah; there were costly embroideries and wonderful mosaic works, and curtains and carpets; what I did not buy myself, Ramzan bought for me. But perhaps I should come again, I said to myself; and I said to Maud that I should certainly come again. Were it not for that indefinite surety I could not have gone away. But meanwhile, when a man cannot face a temptation, is it not better he should flee from it? And so I fled from Agra.

CHAPTER XI

It was entirely Aunt Jane's suggestion. I had been spending what she was pleased to term a quiet fortnight at Alipore: that is to say, I had been living in a far wilder whirl of gaiety than even in Calcutta, whence I had just arrived; and Aunt Jane thought I ought to make some return for all the hospitality. She was quite right. Indeed, she generally was right. I was beginning to find Aunt Jane out. Finding people out is too often an unpleasant process; it frequently alienates one's affections from them altogether; one longs occasionally to be able to drop the muslin curtain again, and see them only from behind its softening folds. With Aunt Jane it was entirely otherwise. Finding her out was pure pleasure. Her kindness of heart I believe to be unequalled, her charity only balanced by the acidity of the remarks that concealed it, while her devotion to my Uncle Robert was pathetic. To all outward appearances it was impossible for him to do anything right; but I came to know, and I fancy Uncle Robert knew, that he could do no wrong. Thus was Aunt Jane, and thus, from the overflowing good-nature that specialised her, she demanded that I should give a dinner-party to my hosts and hostesses.

"It must not be too big," she said. "On the other hand we must not keep it too select. It is a delicate matter, but we must manage it with tact."

Accordingly we sent out invitations for twelve, which were duly accepted. Aunt Jane looked grave as she laid the answers on my table. "Twelve is an excellent number," she remarked, "and I am sorry to go beyond it, but there are the Forsyths; they will be dreadfully offended if we don't include them."

I invited the Forsyths. That evening at the Club I noticed that a kind of breathlessness hung in the air. The weight of popularity sat heavily on me; I was greeted gushingly by everyone; the invitations to tea and picnics were such that my brain reeled; it is awful for a modest man to be raised thus suddenly to the pinnacle of fame. I complained about it to Aunt Jane as we drove home. "If this was the result of a dinner-party," I said, "I never want to give another one." She cheered me up as best she could. "Alipore is a small place," she said, "and things get about so quickly. Nobody cares in the least about you really, or about your dinner-party, but nobody wants to be left out of it. That is at the bottom of everything. And by the way I have just recollected Nellie Wigram. I'm afraid we must ask her, and then we must have a man to pair with her. If you would not mind just two more notes——"

I wrote two more notes. Next day a harassing morning was spent with Aunt Jane at the Club, where the dinner was to take place. Between her and the club-steward I never endured a more miserable time. We selected pink as the prevailing colour for the table, but just as everything was arranged and we were about to go home, Aunt Jane changed her mind and decided on yellow; I do not know why, except that it pleases her sex to veer about from one point to another. She said she thought it would be less common-place; the club-steward agreed with her; I acquiesced wretchedly. She sat down again,—she had previously been half-way across the room towards the door. "But what sort of yellow flowers can we have?" she asked. The steward didn't know of any yellow flowers. We waited interminably till the head-gardener was called; he appeared finally, a wretched figure of a head-gardener in meagre clothing. He shifted from one leg to another and was blankly idiotic; he had never heard of yellow flowers and suggested pink roses. The steward thought that, after all, scarlet decorations would be the most effective and the most easily managed. I backed him up for all I was worth, conscious that pointsettias could

not fail us. After half-an-hour's arguing, my Aunt agreed. "Of course," she said, "you will alter the colour of the ices." The steward, who was looking hungry, swore to alter anything we pleased. He bowed us out, and we drove home to lunch weary and worn. Half way through that meal a note was handed to my Aunt. She read it through, her expression getting grimmer and grimmer, and then passed it on to me. "I can't quite believe it," ran this epistle, "but I hear your nephew is giving a dinner at the Club on the twentieth. I had chosen that date for a small musical *soirée*, but of course if the Club rooms are wanted, I shall be only too happy to waive my claim, etc."

"It's not only Mrs. Vernon," remarked my Aunt, "although she is the most spiteful little cat that ever lived; those two girls who are staying with her have egged her on to this. What are we to do now?"

It's wonderful how refreshment invigorates one. "Invite the lot," I cried cheerfully.

"That means another three men—"

"No matter," I said, and lit a cigarette. I sent out six more invitations. My dinner-party was growing and with it my responsibilities.

The next day I was indulging in a harmless morning canter when I was joined by a lady who had always, in my presence at any rate, professed a real and very ardent affection for my Aunt. She appeared to desire my company and so I rode along beside her and we chatted pleasantly on many subjects. I had just reached the corner that must separate us on our homeward ways, when the bomb burst. "I hear you're giving a dinner-party," she cried; "that's very sporting of you."

I looked wretchedly round for escape. There was none; only a blank Indian road with trees on either side and the sun streaming through them; not another soul was in sight. In sheer desperation of spirit I walked into the trap. "I hope you're coming," I gasped.

"I'm not asked," she said archly.

I assured her the invitation was on its way. Then I rode back and confessed to Aunt Jane. She was turning out the drawing-room with the aid of about fifteen servants of sorts, led by the red-coated chuprassies. "You've done what?" she fairly shrieked. "I've invited Mrs. Morton," I said miserably. I have never in my life so longed for my mother as I did at that moment. My Aunt turned on me in awful reproach. "Are you

not aware, Ambrose, that she and I are not on speaking terms?" she asked.

"How could I know?" I faltered. "She always raves about you; only just now she said—"

"Said?" My Aunt appealed to the roof of the verandah. "He judges by what a woman says! Men are so appallingly dense. Why, one of my chief reasons for wishing to give the dinner-party was in order to leave her out."

I apologised humbly. "I really couldn't be expected to know that," I said.

Aunt Jane sat down in the midst of a medley of furniture and considered. "There's only one thing to be done now," she said at last; "you must ask the Anstruthers and the Jacksons. That will annoy her terribly; she won't expect to meet them."

I agreed joyfully; anything for peace. The Anstruthers and the Jacksons were invited, and accepted. The dinner-party had swelled to thirty or more; it had grown so large that Aunt Jane thought it advisable that I should order a band and have a little dancing afterwards. I ordered the band. That afternoon playing croquet at a garden-party with an acquaintance of mine, a pretty little girl, she said innocently: "I hear there is a dance at the Club on the 20th. Are you going to it?" I swear I gave her no encouragement. I pretended not to hear; I hurled my ball to the farthest corner of the croquet-ground; I rushed breathlessly after it; I entered into amiable conversation with my antagonists; I engrossed myself in the game; it was all useless; in the end I invited her father and her mother and her sister, and the brother who was staying with them on leave. I was absolutely reckless; after all it was my dinner-party and my dance. Aunt Jane held on to a table for support when I told her. "They are not even seen in our set," she gasped. "The Fanshawes have quarrelled with them; the Anstruthers and the Jacksons haven't spoken to them for a year; they are at loggerheads with nearly all the other people. You simply don't understand the horror of it, Ambrose."

That is what comes of doing good-natured things. I had wanted to give a little pleasure to kind acquaintances who had treated me hospitably. Instead of that, I had set the whole place by the ears. I ventured to take Uncle Robert into my confidence. He was very sympathetic. "Indian society," he said, "is a very explosive article. It is always ready to blaze; one has but to lay the match."

I, however, am not an anarchist and I like to live on good terms with my fellow men. The responsibility of that dinner-party made me a changed man. I grew morose ; I refused to accompany Aunt Jane to the Club ; instead I stole out of the house by a back way and rode for miles across country in haunts beloved of the jackal. I used to look in the glass and wonder whether my hair would turn white. As the eventful day approached I grew morbidly restless. I asked Uncle Robert if I might not accompany him to his office and hear petitions. When he returned home, tired out, at seven in the evening he would find me in his study waiting for him. People were afraid of Uncle Robert ; I do not know why, for a kinder, gentler man never lived. But people are apt to be afraid of the brain that knows what is right, and the will that determines to do it ; and so by keeping close to his company, I was pretty secure from attack. Those few days of shelter under his wing were perhaps the happiest that I spent at Alipore. I learnt much of the East and its ways, and began to wonder indeed that, amid all the responsibilities of our vast Empire, people found time to fret over a social trifle.

"Trifle indeed !" snorted Aunt Jane. "Young people are so hasty in their conclusions. Why India itself might go to pieces before a single point of precedence could be given up."

The evening before the fateful occasion arrived I was sitting in the study smoking the pipe of peace with my Uncle, when Aunt Jane burst in on her return from the Club. "I give it up," she said. It was some time before we could extract the truth from her. At last she gasped it out. "It's that Macnoodle woman," she explained. "She is the only head of a Department that you have not asked, Ambrose ; she has sat at home for two days expecting the invitation ; and this afternoon she was left in hysterics."

I expostulated. "I know nothing about Departments," I said crossly. "How should I ?"

Aunt Jane held up her hand. "Didn't I beg of you, my dear Ambrose," she cried, "to disassociate yourself from your dinner-party entirely ? Nobody bothers about you ; you might just as well not be there, so long as the rest of the world is not absent."

I took the hint. I retired to my own room in company with the Alipore directory and went through it carefully, inviting everyone to my dance (it had swelled to that at last) whose name seemed in the least familiar ; I believe in my hurry I included the

local grocer and two or three railway conductors. Next morning I went to Aunt Jane early. "A friend of mine in the jungle," I said, waving an urgent yellow telegram at her, "is dangerously ill. I must go to him at once; we were boys together at school."

As I have explained, Aunt Jane is exceedingly kind of heart. She did not demur, but consented to act as hostess for me that night. "Send me the bill," were my last words to her.

I went away at once. In my diary I wrote: *Left Alipore by 11 a. m. mail train—for good.*

CHAPTER XII

I HAD shot tigers with Maharajas; I had been to all the show-places beloved of globe-trotters; I had idled through a very moist three weeks or so in Calcutta; and now the cold weather, as India terms her gorgeous winter, was slipping away, and heat, not very apparent at first, but very persistent, began to simmer in its stead.

I had to make plans, and I hated making plans; I preferred to drift. I should say the greatest drawback to India was this necessity for keeping to dates. India is relentless in her dates; in every station throughout the length and breadth of the country there is not a man or woman who cannot tell you exactly when the exodus to the hills will commence, when the first punkahs will pull, when the nights will cease to be cool, and the days will begin to be hot. One is inclined to scoff at first. These pampered Anglo-Indians possibly make the worst of it, rushing away at the first signal of the heat-flag. One does not scoff in the end. The long silent days, the breathless nights, the never-ending thirst, these are all literal facts, to be faced anyway one likes. There is no escaping from them, except by a journey to the Himalayas or a voyage home.

My present programme included Simla, and the way thither led past Agra. I could not resist it; I felt I must see her again. In my letters I attributed my intention of stopping there to a desire to visit Fatehpur Sikhri, that deserted pleasure-haunt of a Mogul emperor. It was all settled accordingly. As it was too hot to go there by day, she and I and Tip were to motor there in the cool of the evening, spend the night, and return early next morning. One can indulge in these prolonged picnics in India without any trouble. I sent Ramzan on a day or

two ahead to make all arrangements. Everything would be safe in his hands, I knew ; he could cook as well as he could run up bills, which was saying a good deal.

I thought she looked a little pale and thin, as we drove along the glaring road past Akbar's famous tomb to the still more famous city of his creation. Perhaps the heat was telling on her ; but there was more than that ; there was a trouble in her eyes, which I, as a mere man, could not attempt to fathom. She, who had always been so gay and light-spirited, was suddenly grown grave, almost, it appeared to me, sad. Had the fate, which sooner or later tangles us all in its cruel meshes, overtaken her already ? Had she perhaps lost her heart to someone in hot, straggling, dusty Agra ? So soon ? The thought was bitter to me ; yet was it not too likely ?

Tip left us after dinner to study those eternal books of his. We had previously explored the palace to our hearts' content. She was tired now, and we wandered to the Hall of Audience and sat down on the stone steps, the silent galleries all round it, the stars, millions of them in the clear sky, shining brightly above us. There is always an inspiration in the ruins of the past ; how much more so in a past that is not ruined but only dead ? This pillared hall stood exactly as it had stood three hundred years ago when Akbar dispensed justice from his throne, or pondered on immortality, or checked the rising ire of argumentative priests of every race and creed, each eager to be in the right, none allowing that he could be in the wrong. The glory of those distant days still seemed to echo in the silent buildings and deserted streets around us. A poetry and grace unknown to modern times hovered over the carving and marble traceries of tomb and mosque and palace. It was good to sit there in the peace of such exquisite surroundings, with a companion whose thoughts were so in tune to one's own. The evening, which had been oppressive, was gradually cooling to night ; a faint breeze rustled past us every now and then, as refreshing as it was fitful. Maud sat leaning a little forward, her hands clasped across her knees, her dreamy eyes gazing into the starlight, a slim shadowy Maud in the dimness. I smoked a cigarette and watched her in silence. Akbar and his philosophy, I fear, were far away from my thoughts just then.

"If only India could always be like this," she said at last.

"You would tire of it," I answered. "The domestic bungalow with all its drawbacks is more comfortable than the most gorgeous

Indian palace. There is never any getting away from the everydayness of life. Marble floors, and carved ceilings and pillars, and exquisitely wrought screens are beautiful but not practical, and they would be horribly draughty."

"But I don't want things to be practical," argued Maud, tilting her chin haughtily. "I would like them to be picturesque. If we all thought more of our surroundings and less about ourselves, wouldn't the world be a nicer and a happier place?"

"It would be less amusing," I suggested.

"I can't see any tremendous amusement in an ill-built house with four rooms and the eternal chit-chat of one's neighbours."

"Surroundings are expensive, gossip is cheap," I reflected.

"I didn't know," said Maud, looking annoyed, "that you were cynical."

"I didn't know it myself till just now," I entreated humbly.

She laughed in spite of herself, laughter which ended in a sigh. "And so you are going to Simla?"

"For my sins."

"You will learn the best and the worst of India there, I suppose."

"I don't fancy," I answered, "that I shall learn anything about India there at all; only a great deal about indifferent England."

"Then why go? You are that most enviable of all enviable creations, an independent man. Why not go home?"

I felt perilously near to telling her the whole truth. "There is a reason," I said.

As I spoke I tried hard to think of Nancy; at the same time I longed to forget her for ever and ever. Such foolish influences can be wrought on a man by those mischievous stars, those stately halls of audience, those balmy breezes whispering sweet nothings as they rustle by. It would not do. I tried to collect myself. "I wish," I said in my most matter of fact, brotherly voice, "that you were going away too. You ought not to stay in the heat."

"I can't leave Tip," she replied.

Was it fancy or did her voice tremble? "If you will permit me," I said gently, "I should like to remark that there are occasions when ladies value themselves too highly. Tip will get on very well without you."

"I don't think he would, and at any rate I couldn't leave him."

"Your sex is hard to convince," I murmured, "I am so sorry—I wish—"

She mistook my meaning. "Thank you very much," she said icily, "but I don't want any sympathy."

I felt that she was annoyed at something, but for the life of me I could not think at what. "May I not be sorry all the same?" I asked. "I am going away to coolness myself; I should like to have thought that you were going too."

"To Simla?" she scoffed. "To dance and enjoy myself and flirt? When you are there, you will forget other places."

"I shall never forget this," I assured her earnestly, "not our friendship, nor your goodness to me. I shall not need to forget it. You will be friends with me always, will you not?"

"Friends!" She spoke bitterly. "It means so much and so little, sometimes so very little."

"Yet you will promise, won't you?" I urged.

She was silent for a minute or two. When she answered all the life and joyousness seemed to have gone out of her being. "Yes, I will promise," she said.

I ought to have understood then, but somehow I didn't. The emotions of a lifetime are often contained in the space of a few seconds. If I had taken her in my arms then; if I had told her I loved her then,—but I did nothing of the sort. How many dramas those pillars and galleries of Akbar's court have looked down on, I know not, but this I know, that our life drama seemed to begin and end there. It was hot, yet she shivered. "Tip will wonder what has become of us," she said; "we must go."

She rose, a beautiful queenly figure in the starlight, the reminiscences of a deserted city floating round her. She held out her hand. "I feel as though this were our last good-bye."

There were tears in her voice; there were tears, I believe, in her shining eyes. Looking back now I know, but then I chose to be blindly ignorant. I dared not however trust myself to speak; I only stooped and kissed her hand. Nancy herself could not have rebuked me for the reverence of that kiss.

And so it was over. As often happens, a trivial incident detracted from the intensity of the moment. I had mislaid my cigarette-case, and we both bent to search for it on the stone steps.

I struck a match, and just as I did so, she exclaimed, "It is here." The match flared; she pressed the spring of the case and it flew open in her hand. There, smiling up at us in roguish beauty, was the picture of Nancy I always carried with me. Ere yet the flame of the match had quite died away her eyes met mine; and I knew that she had guessed the reason.

CHAPTER XIII

I SUPPOSE if people were asked what India was most famous for, some would say the Taj, others flirtations, but I would say memories.

We were at a ball in the Town-Hall at Simla, where I was staying with Aunt Jane, preparatory to going on a shooting expedition in the Himalayas. She (I do not mean Aunt Jane) was a divine dancer, and luckily the empty spaces on our programmes corresponded. When we were tired of dancing we sat in one of the alcoves overlooking the ballroom, and watched the brilliant throng whirl by.

"Memories," I said, "are so unsatisfying."

"Yet in the end they are all that India leaves us."

"I should not have thought Simla could produce such a reflective mood," I murmured.

"Should you not?" She laughed a little. "Yet the very rush of pleasure forces one into reflection sometimes. Or is it that the reflection is always there, and that one is only running away from it?"

"It is possible it may be so," I answered cautiously. "Personally I am given no time to reflect. Your Simla's worst fault is the unsatiable desire for amusement."

"Not Simla only," she answered sadly; "you do injustice there. Simla is after all only a condensed bit of India crowded into one little space for a few short months. If you lived longer in the country you would understand why even the most sober moth of us all turns into a butterfly. We are fluttering for ever round a light that may at any time flicker and go out."

Were her words prophetic? As I rode home in my rickshaw the events of the past few weeks forced themselves in a confused blur on my memory. They had had no meaning for me. Partly out of curiosity, partly from a desire to forget, I had accepted one invitation after another, and the days had slipped by in an

unbroken monotony of pleasure. The strangest part of India would seem to be its contrasts. All the time my thoughts were hovering round a light unattainable and far away. Would that too flicker and go out, leaving me in the tragedy of darkness?

The last waltz of the ball was still ringing in my ears, the confusion of voices and laughter still echoing in the air, as I took up the bundle of letters that were waiting for me on my return.

Uninteresting mostly, and put aside until the morning, except one, in Tip's handwriting. I tore it open eagerly; news from Agra had been too scanty since last I had said good-bye there. It was short and hurried, blurred too in places as though Tip's feelings had overcome him in the writing of it. "Maud is ill," so it ran; "she is down with enteric. The doctors won't tell me outright, but I fear they think badly of her case."

Maud was ill. I read the letter through again and again, stupefied. Maud was ill—the doctors thought badly of her case—and I was up here in Simla, dancing, racing, playing polo, industriously idling through the indifferent hours in my endeavour to forget what I now knew I must remember for ever. Knowledge branded itself suddenly on my brain; the truth that had been retarded so long, revealed itself full and free. I must go to her; she must get well. Duty, loyalty, Nancy faded away before a love that would defy sickness, would defy death itself. And when I had saved her, when I had made her live again, we should be together,—always together. Such was the refrain that repeated itself incessantly as I journeyed down the hill next day; such the refrain that the train clanked on its iron girders as we rushed on through the night,—together, together, always together.

I had to wait two hours at Tundla for the mail which was to carry me on to Agra, and because I was hurried, it of course was late. The heat was blazing: not a soul stirred on the parched platform; a few natives huddled themselves together wherever there was a scrap of shade; in the waiting-rooms the flies were preeminent, unabashed even by the drowsy flickings of the dingy punkah; the officials had all shut themselves up in their stuffy little offices, seeking what coolness was possible away from the glare outside. At last, and it seemed like an eternity spent in Dante's Inferno, a bell rang. There was a sluggish revival of life. Men crossed the line with green flags in their hands, and

a certain amount of business in their air ; the sweatmeat-seller uncovered his goods expectantly, and the water-carrier swished a few grateful drops of water here and there ; a ticket-collector or two wandered about ; finally the station-master himself appeared gasping, and wiping the perspiration from his brow. A little crowd of coolies (Ramzan had been left behind at Simla) collected round me and seized my modest baggage ; and at length wearily, as though it too found the burden of climate greater than it could bear, the mail-train panted into the station. The third-class compartments were full enough, though more silent than usual with the travelling native ; but the white first-class carriages might have been carriages of the dead as they swung heavily by ; every shutter was shut, every window closed against the red-hot heat. I thrust myself and my luggage into the first compartment I came across. A man in extremely light clothing with a wet towel on his head, who was lying asleep, roused himself slightly as I stumbled in, muttered something uncomplimentary to myself and the heat and the world in general, and composed himself to slumber again. The train moved on. In a short time now I should be there.

I would not allow the rattling conveyance I had hired at the station to drive up to the house. I halted it at the gate, and walked the little bit of familiar road, that wound round the dry grassplot and the flowerbeds, to the verandah. The flowers were all dead long ago ; the grass was brown, the garden neglected. With a sinking heart I stepped on to the verandah and waited a moment. Not a soul was about. No silence can ever be so intense as the silence of an Indian afternoon in the hot weather. The servants I supposed were all asleep. I pushed open the door and entered. The drawing-room looked terribly empty. The white muslin curtains hung limp, their blue bows all dusty and knotted ; the chairs and tables stood about stiffly ; it was clear to see no woman's hand had lately put them in their places. I listened, hating the very sound of my own breathing in that awful silence. No one stirred. With an effort I called, as I thought very gently, and yet my voice sounded harsh and discordant, and smote the air with a jarring noise which made me indisposed to repeat the experiment. Suddenly I caught my breath.

There was a sound in a room on the other side of the house. Then heavy footsteps dragged themselves towards me. The

curtains that parted drawing and dining room were put aside, and Tip stood there, but oh, my God, how altered ! Gaunt, white, haggard,—it was easy to see that heat and anxiety had done their work.

"Didn't you get my telegram ?" I asked.

He put his hand to his forehead. "They may have done so—that is to say—the others—I daresay it's about somewhere—"

"Didn't you know I was coming ?"

"No."

"Didn't she know ?" He was so long in answering that I went to him and shook him by the shoulders. "Didn't she know ?" I repeated.

His wild eyes, vacant, uncomprehending, stared into mine.

"She is dead," he said ; "they buried her yesterday." And he sank down on to a chair.

I sent Tip away, as soon as it could be managed, to Simla, to Aunt Jane. She, I knew, would comfort as no one else could, and under her motherly supervision I hoped and believed that his desolation would find some relief. For myself there seemed to be no more object in life. With all of us I suppose, at some time or another of our existence, the clouds are rent asunder to show us the light that never was on land or sea. To some the reflection lasts for ever and grows more glorious with time ; to others it dazzles for one brief moment, to be treasured in memory only.

I went down to Bombay, meaning to travel further to Japan and Australia, anywhere away from India and regret ; but a telegram from my lawyers altered the current of my plans. My uncle was dead, and I, as his heir, was urgently needed in England. So the future was settled for me whether I would have it so or not. On board the mail-steamer that was to take me home, they brought me another telegram, this time from Nancy. It contained a single word : *Congratulations.*

THE END

GILBERT BURNET, BISHOP OF SALISBURY

THE Scotchman, as a type, is generally accredited with the possession of shrewdness, discretion, and taciturnity, a sense of humour that can seldom be persuaded to descend from its own rocky fastnesses, and an eye to his own advancement that commands grudging admiration even from his opponents. In short, that expressive adjective *dour* seems to have been coined by Scotchmen with the object of describing their own national character. Perhaps there has never been such a contradiction of that accepted type as the subject of this paper.

Shrewdness may fairly be granted to him, but in all other particulars he differed widely from the aforesaid ideal. He brought indiscretion almost to the level of an art, and his reputation as a blabber of secrets would seem to have totally unfitted him for dealings with a Court. He was notorious for his impulsive speech and the throne itself was no protection against his unguarded tongue. To five sovereigns in succession did this irrepressible churchman speak the first thoughts of his mind, and each of the five, including even gentle Queen Mary, seems at one time or another to have writhed beneath his appalling frankness. This is a distinction to which few can have attained. As for his humour, such as it was, it seems to have been of the homely order that appeals to a mixed audience, and his best friends admitted that he was fluent, even to a fault, with tongue and pen. For the rest, the man who implored his king to abstain from his darling vices in one of the most singular letters that astonished royalty can ever have received, may scarcely be accused of studying his own interests; and apart from his marriages the Doctor seems to have been strikingly careless of his own advancement.

And yet although apparently unfitted by nature for diplomacy, Gilbert Burnet played no small part in great events. In five reigns he may be said to have been a man of note, and to have

fairly held his own in very doubtful waters. Few men have ever made fiercer enemies : few men have ever committed grosser faults of tact and taste ; and yet without high qualities he would scarcely have retained King William's confidence until his death. The dry, silent King must have found the impulsive verbosity of his servant very trying, yet their intercourse was uninterrupted save by slight and passing clouds. No doubt the worthy Doctor's hide was fairly thick, and he was probably heedless of rebuffs that other men could not endure to risk ; but, be that as it may, the King occasionally laid aside his icy reserve before him, and revealed a side of his nature that was unguessed by most. In his absences from England he always wished the Bishop to be near the Queen, and before his departure for the campaign in Ireland he called him into his closet and spoke to him in a fashion that commonly he reserved for Bentinck. He said that he wished those who loved him to wait upon and assist the poor Queen, and he repeated those last three words with great and unusual tenderness.

If Gilbert Burnet, despite his natural failings, rose to high honour and exacted the tribute of most bitter jealousy, it was thanks in a great measure to his own industry and courage. He was born at Edinburgh in 1643, and his father, who was out of employment through his refusal to acknowledge Cromwell's government, personally superintended his education until the age of ten. Then he sent him to Aberdeen College, and here Gilbert acquired the Greek tongue, "and went through the usual course of Aristotelian logic and philosophy with uncommon applause." He became Master of Arts at the precocious age of fourteen, and then chose to study civil law for twelve months. After that, to his father's joy, he changed his mind and turned his thoughts towards the Church. We are told that he read history for amusement, and seldom studied less than fourteen hours a day. No one can question that stoutness, both of body and constitution, which afterwards directed the delicate gibes of his opponents against the thickness of his calves.

At eighteen he was put on trial as a probationer, and perhaps some indication of that trial, as given by the Bishop's son, may be of interest. The probationer was first required to preach *practically* upon a given text : next to preach *critically* upon another, the sense of which was disputed ; and then to give a mixed sermon of criticism and practical inference from the text.

After this he was allotted a head of divinity, on which he was to make a Latin oration, and give out a thesis which he must defend in public. Then a Hebrew psalm and a portion of the Greek Testament were given him, and he was required to render them into English *extempore*. Last of all he was put to the questioning trial, in which every minister of the district was at liberty to put such questions to him as he chose, either out of the Scriptures or body of Divinity. All this, to the mere lay mind, appears sufficiently searching.

When young Burnet had passed the trial he was offered a good benefice by his cousin german, which he felt bound to decline on account of his tender years. He chose to continue his studies, and in 1663, two years after his father's death, he came to England and visited the two Universities and London. In the capital he met all the most noted divines, including Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Patrick, and Loyd, and also, among the laity, Sir Robert Murray, the founder and president of the Royal Society. Next year he travelled to Holland, meeting Lutherans, Unitarians, Arminians, Brownists, Anabaptists, and Papists, and he always claimed that, from the virtues he perceived in the members of these sects, he learned the toleration that, save in the case of the last named, was always a marked feature of his character.

In 1665, upon his return to Scotland, he was ordained priest and accepted the living of Saltoun from Sir Robert Fletcher. Here for four years he worked with characteristic energy, and also proved his courage by an attack upon the laxity of the Scottish Bishops, which placed him in some danger and naturally did not tend to his popularity with his superiors. A story is preserved of his charity while at this parish, and may be accepted as typical of his whole life. One of his parishioners applied for his help after an execution for debt, and Burnet directed his servant to hand the man a sum which would once more set him up in business. "Sir," remonstrated the servant, "it is all we have in the house." "Well, well, pay it to this poor man," answered his master; "you do not know the pleasure there is in making a man glad." It is only fair to remark that his charities, which in after life were almost princely, were invariably managed with strict secrecy. This trait is worthy of notice in a man who certainly seldom erred upon the side of modesty, and who was ever inclined to ostentation in the display of his talents.

In 1669 he was appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, and in this position for four years and a half his labours might have put a galley-slave to shame. He was accustomed to begin his studies at four in the morning, and this heroic practice, with a relaxation of two hours in the winter, he continued to the end of his long life. About this time he was entrusted with the compilation of the *MEMOIRS OF THE DUKES OF HAMILTON*, and, going to London in connection with this work, he was offered his choice of four vacant bishoprics in Scotland. This advancement he refused, with a lack of self-interest and ambition that contrast, strikingly with the later accusations of his political opponents.

Upon his return to Glasgow he married the Lady Margaret Kennedy, daughter of the Earl of Cassilis, and the first of his three wives. There was a marked disparity in their ages, and Gilbert Burnet took a rather peculiar step to prove that the match was one of affection. Upon the day before the marriage he handed the lady a bond, renouncing all pretension to her considerable fortune which was otherwise unsecured. Swift comments with acid venom upon his three wives, but it may be said that the Lady Margaret was an invalid for years, during which time her husband nursed her with great gentleness, and that there was a sufficient reason, as is shown later in this article, for his third plunge into wedlock. All his children came to him from his second marriage, which seems to have been happy and prosperous.

In 1672 he published his *VINDICATION OF THE CHURCH AND STATE OF SCOTLAND*, which was so pleasing to those in authority that he was again pressed to accept a bishopric, with the promise of the next archbishopric that should be vacant. But this offer also he thought fit to decline.

In 1673 he again journeyed to London, and now the fame of his writings procured him admission to Court. Charles seems to have magnified the Doctor's influence in Scotland (or perhaps he accepted the young churchman's own view of that influence), and he had many conversations with him in private concerning the politics of that stormy kingdom. He made him one of his chaplains, and the Duke of York showed him even greater favour. The fearless Doctor seems to have made use of his opportunities only to preach chastity and energy to the Merry Monarch, and the evils of the Roman Church to his bigoted

brother. The man may have been self-seeking and greedy of success, as his enemies so constantly asserted, but he chose a sufficiently unlikely road by which to attain his ends.

In the following year, thanks to the animosity of the Duke of Lauderdale, some of whose confidences he had betrayed under pressure, he was compelled to resign his professor's chair and settle in London. Here he found that he had forfeited the King's favour, although the Duke of York was still well disposed towards him, and that his material prospects were naturally somewhat clouded. In 1675 he was appointed preacher to the Master of the Rolls, and also lecturer at St. Clement's, and in these positions he remained for some nine years. Although the King's disfavour was very marked at first, he soon became one of the most noted preachers in town, and according to an impartial witness made an uncommonly fine figure in the pulpit. He was a tall broad man, with dark twinkling eyes, and, in striking contrast to his rivals, he always preached *extempore*. The best sermon of his life was preached literally at a moment's notice, when Bishop Williams was prevented by an accident from taking his place in the pulpit of Bow Church.

In 1679 he published the first volume of his HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION, which won him the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, and in the January of this year he wrote the letter to King Charles to which allusion has been made. I only regret that space does not permit of its quotation in full, for seldom can a king have received so frank an epistle from so insignificant a man. In it he states "that most people grow sullen, and are highly dissatisfied with you and distrustful of you," and goes on to point out that "there is one thing, and indeed the only thing, in which all honest men agree, as that which can easily extricate you out of all your troubles ; it is not the change of a minister or of a council. . . . but it is . . . a change in your own heart, and in your course of life." He states further that "you have not feared nor served God, but have given yourself up to so many sinful pleasures," and adds that he desires no hypocritical show of religion in his king, but a real change. He concludes his long and solemn warning with a most moving appeal for better things, and one can only wonder in what spirit of amazement it was read by the cynical monarch. He was seen to throw the letter into the fire, and afterwards spoke of Gilbert Burnet with great asperity,—which is perhaps not surprising.

But Charles, who had at least the virtue of careless good-nature, apparently bore no lasting malice, for later he offered his daring correspondent the bishopric of Chichester, provided he would come entirely into his interests. The Doctor answered "that he did not know what might be meant by that expression," and the negotiations ended.

During all this time he was living in friendship with the Earl of Essex and Lord Russell, and, when they were arrested after the discovery of the Rye House Plot, he stirred the Court to lasting indignation by his conduct. He attended Lord Russell in prison and afterwards upon the scaffold, and was examined sharply by the Council with reference to that nobleman's dying speech, which he was suspected of having written. Nothing could be proved against him, and his attitude was entirely fearless; but both his appointments were taken away and his prospects in England seemed completely blasted. He soon returned from Paris, whither he had retired for a while, but upon the accession of James he obtained leave to quit the kingdom. He wandered about the Continent, visiting Rome and Geneva, until, in 1686, he was invited by the Prince and Princess of Orange to The Hague.

From this date the Doctor's connection with great doings may be fairly said to have begun. Hitherto he had been only a clever free lance, brought to the front by his own industry and assurance, but now he became one of the trusted advisers of the ablest man in Europe. There can be no question but that William even at this early date was looking towards England. James was known as a headstrong, bigoted Papist, and, as his shrewder brother had foretold, he was likely to take to his travels at an early date. An honest man, well acquainted with the English Court and with English hopes and fears, was essential to the Prince of Orange, and such a man he hoped to find in Gilbert Burnet. The Doctor had been warmly recommended by Halifax and by Lady Russell, and in a little while he had won the confidence of William and his wife.

The story of the great service by which he bridged the gulf between the two has been often told, but it possesses a certain human interest which may excuse a brief allusion. Mary was devoted to her frigid lord, but he had not been entirely faithful to his charming wife, and in addition seems to have been haunted by the galling knowledge that he must be her subject when she

succeeded to her father's crown. Such an idea had never occurred to her simplicity, and William himself had been too proud to speak. It was Dr. Burnet who undertook the delicate task of explaining to the Princess that it was in her power to give her husband the supreme rule if she desired. He did so, with many assurances that he spoke entirely of his own volition. These, however, may well be doubted; the Doctor was not a timid or retiring man, but he would scarcely have ventured to speak of such an important matter without a hint from William. Mary heard him with amazement, but bade him bring the Prince to her immediately that she might assure him of her loyalty and affection. William as usual was hunting, but next day they did meet in the Doctor's presence, and the Princess told her husband that she had not known that the laws of England were so contrary to the laws of God. She did not think, she said, that the husband should be obedient to the wife, and she promised him that he should always bear rule. She asked only that he should obey the command "Husbands love your wives," as she should obey that other, "Wives be obedient to your husbands in all things." From that hour William was often cold and surly to his wife, but at least he gave her his entire regard and confidence. The service that Doctor Burnet had performed was of no small importance to the Protestant world.

The news of his favour at The Hague was most displeasing to King James, who had been intensely irritated by his later writings. At the urgent representation of his ambassador the Doctor was compelled to retire from the Court, but in reality he continued to be trusted and employed in the same manner as before. He received timely notice that a prosecution for high treason was to be instituted against him in Scotland, and he at once took steps to be naturalised in Holland. Shortly before this time he had again married, espousing upon this occasion a wealthy lady resident at The Hague, and to all demands for his surrender the States made answer that without some legal proof of crime they could not move against their subject. It is certain that a sum of £3,000 was offered for the kidnapping of his person, and in this matter King Louis offered his ready aid to the English Government; but public feeling was all in the Doctor's favour and he continued to show himself recklessly at The Hague.

In all William's preparations for a descent on England Burnet gave his advice with characteristic freedom, and he wrote to the

Court of Hanover, pointing out that the success of the enterprise must naturally end in an entail of the British Crown upon that Protestant house. He represents himself as writing this letter upon his own responsibility, but again it seems certain that it was done in obedience to a suggestion from William. From this time onwards the Doctor was always personally esteemed by the Princess Sophia, and there was a regular and friendly correspondence between them until her death.

He assisted in drawing up William's declaration before he sailed, and, if proof of his courage were needed, he gave it by accompanying the expedition as the Prince's chaplain. There can be no doubt that, if the venture had failed, the worthy Doctor would have been hurried to Scotland, where torture was still legal. James had expressed himself with peculiar malignity against him, and his favourite implement, the boot, would certainly have been fitted upon the future Bishop's massive limbs. But the Doctor apparently cared nothing for these things, and we see him pressing military advice upon his icy master in the moment of his landing, and later doing excellent and more fitting service in the protection of the Roman Catholics.

During the Interregnum Gilbert Burnet's character showed itself in the pleasantest light. It had been suggested that William should take the crown for his life, and that the Princess should be a subject. This proposal the Doctor combated with all his strength. He was devoted to both his patrons, but it was the gentle Princess who had won his entire affection. He represented to Bentinck the gross unfairness of the plan, after Mary's generous treatment of the Prince, and he begged to be released from his chaplaincy that he might be free to fight for her with all his powers. It was possibly due in part to his staunch loyalty that the project was laid aside.

Soon after the King and Queen were settled on their thrones the bishopric of Salisbury became vacant, and apparently to the Doctor's surprise it was given to him. He says that the King told him of the appointment in terms more obliging than usually fell from him. Certainly the choice in many ways was a happy one. The Bishop proved himself an undoubted partisan in the House of Lords, where he spoke volubly and often, but in his see he worked untiringly and well. He proved Queen Mary's right-hand man in all clerical matters, of which, by her husband's wish, she had sole control. He laboured generously and unselfishly on

behalf of the poorer clergy, and later, in Anne's reign, it was owing to his efforts that the revenue raised from the first fruits and the tenths was applied to the improvement of small livings. When the Bill for settling the succession was brought to the House of Lords, he was appointed by the King to propose the naming of the Duchess of Brunswick as the successor of Anne and her children. One of the blots upon his fame is the part he took in the illegal attainder of Sir John Fenwick, when a man of his profession might well have leaned towards pity even to the sacrifice of his party interests. In all debates he showed himself a staunch and even violent Whig, but in religious matters a man of tolerance, except in the case of Roman Catholics.

In 1694 the whole turbulent nation was grieved by the death of the Queen, and in the following year the Bishop in a lengthy essay paid his tribute to her pure and gentle memory. In 1698 he lost his second wife from smallpox, and when the King appointed him preceptor to the Duke of Gloucester he declined the honour. William, however, was resolute that he was the most fitting person to undertake the education of the young prince, and in the end the Bishop waived his objections. This new charge, and the care of his own young family, made a third marriage seem desirable, and a Mrs. Berkeley, a woman of "uncommon degrees of knowledge, piety, and virtue," was the lady of his choice. The stipend he received for the education of the short-lived prince was devoted entirely to charity, and indeed, as has been said, he was always generous to the utmost limit of his means.

He attended William upon his death-bed, and it seems hard to believe the malicious story which represents him as driving hurriedly from the palace, when once the breath was out of his patron's body, to prostrate himself before Queen Anne. So uncourtierlike a man was scarcely likely to think of his own advancement at a moment when genuine grief would undoubtedly be uppermost in his mind. It is certain that he always spoke to the new Queen with the same freedom that had characterised his dealings with her predecessors. He himself tells with a certain complacency of his solemn warning to her against the dangers of the peace with France. In less than three years' time she would be murdered, and the fires would be again raised in Smithfield: "I pursued this long," he says, "till I saw she grew uneasy; so I withdrew." One cannot refrain from a certain sympathy with the poor Queen. Lord Dartmouth, who is always vicious in his

comments upon the Bishop, records an instance of his indiscretion. He told Anne that he would tell Burnet a certain story under promise of strict secrecy ; two days later the Bishop came from London to Windsor to tell that story to her Majesty.

Perhaps his last years were the most peaceful of a somewhat stormy life. He devoted himself to the education of his children, and as ever he was unresting in the labours of his diocese. He was always a severe and unflinching critic of the laxity of the clergy, and thus, despite his efforts for the poorer priests, he was scarcely popular with the majority of his brethren. In addition to this he was regarded as being over tender in his attitude towards Dissenters, and this was an unpardonable crime in many eyes. But he seems to have been always indulgent to his fiercest critics, and now he was finally to pass beyond their malice. In 1714 he contracted a heavy chill which turned to pleurisy, and from this he never rallied. He was in his seventy-second year, and perhaps few men have lived more laborious lives.

His character has perhaps been indicated by this short sketch of his career, and there is little need to enlarge upon it further. With all his faults and frailties he played no small part in the story of those stirring, crowded times, and even yet he contrives to cut a striking figure to one's fancy. So he would have wished, for no man loved more to have a finger in every pie, no man was less given to hiding his light beneath a bushel. Through all his life he was a prolific writer, and delivered himself of countless tracts and pamphlets upon the religious and political controversies of his day. His *HISTORY OF MY OWN TIME*, despite its occasional prejudice and unfairness, may still be read with pleasure, and real feeling and affection may be perceived beneath the pomposity of his essay on Queen Mary.

Finally it was said of him with truth "that he looked upon himself with regard to his episcopal revenue as a mere trustee of the Church, bound to expend the whole in the maintenance of a decent figure suitable to his station, in hospitality and in acts of charity." And when he died no more of the income of his bishopric remained to his family than sufficed for the bare payment of his debts.

JOHN BARNETT

comments upon the Bishop, records an instance of his indifference to the world. He told those that he would tell them a story. They were under a great anxiety; and he said to them, "I have come from London to Windsor to tell you a story, and I have brought you a present. It is a book, and it is a book of the world." The Bishop then told them a story of the world, and he said to them, "I have brought you a present. It is a book, and it is a book of the world." The Bishop then told them a story of the world, and he said to them, "I have brought you a present. It is a book, and it is a book of the world."

OLD HAUNTS AND RECOLLECTIONS

THOSE of us who live on the outskirts of a growing town must be content to see their old haunts defaced, destroyed, annihilated. They dream of their youth, and of the far future that may be a return to youth. They say: "The time may come when we shall ramble again in the old fields, beside the hedgerows of the lanes, among the daisies and yellow buttercups, hearing the cuckoo call and the lark sing and the cattle lowing." But when they pass to the old haunts in reality, they find that the lanes are rows of trim monotonous villas, and the fields wildernesses of brick and mortar. It seems like a negation of immortality. How can we ourselves hope for a future enduring life, when these dear haunts, that seemed a part of our very selves, are utterly transformed, and become as foreign places to us? Sometimes we meet a thing that seems enduring,—an old house that has stood for centuries, a grey minster—or it may be something far older than these, a relic of people who were here before the Romans came, before the Celtic hordes wandered westward, a barrow, an earthwork, a weapon of chipped stone, or perhaps an obelisk brought hither, after facing for untold centuries the burning suns of Egypt. Then we can reason differently; we have something on the other side. We can say: "If these things, the mere work of man's hands, survive, shall not the spirit that created them have a life not to be measured by the substance that is material? Shall the earth and the stone endure, and not the soul of man?"

When I was a boy I lived in a street that was at first almost like a country road. Some of the houses were still hidden behind old-fashioned garden walls; just round the corner was a field with cows grazing, a genuine rustic field with a wooden stile, leading to more fields and unspoiled country. The road facing this field had houses only on one side; on the other was a hedge, and where there is a hedge there are beauty and life.

Gr
gar
bec
van
sta
eln
chi
the
be
na
ne
wa
be
fin
wh
m
tri
le
m
th
th
P
be
p
th
a
b
y
th
b
C
t
i
v
t
t
l
a
f
t

Gradually the encroaching city spread out its arms. The gardens gave place to small houses facing the road. The hedge became a wall; the path across the field became a road, the stile vanished entirely; rows of houses and a large noisy school now stand there. A lane near had half a dozen or so of the finest elms I have ever seen, elms beneath which I had played in childhood and lingered in sentimental youth. A few years since these trees were mercilessly pulled down; they had been the beauty and glory of the neighbourhood, but the lane was too narrow for increasing traffic, and the things of perennial loveliness had to go. I passed, but could not bear to linger and watch the work of sacrilege. I was sorrowful and indignant, yet behind my sorrow and anger I recognised the inevitable. These fine trees had their value as timber; the strip of ground on which they stood had its value; a city corporation pays good money when it has to purchase space for enlarging a road. I tried the refuge of stoicism; the old years were gone for ever; let the dead past bury its dead. But they are not gone; they must live if the personality lives. A better consolation was the thought that these memories are spiritual, not material; though the whole earth changes, the soul retains what was its own. Part of the fields that used to be rich with mowing-grass have been converted into a public park, something that seems like a partial salvage from destruction. Children still play there, and the grass grows; rooks fly above it, and smaller birds twitter among its trees. To compare the neatly kept park, the flower-beds and formal paths, with the old open fields, would be absurd; yet still it is something. A few of the older trees survive, and the grass may have some affinity to that which used to wave so beautifully beneath the passing breezes on summer evenings. Close by is a tiny lane, a footpath rather, that was especially dear to me. It is now a mere back-way for a long road of houses; it is marred with refuse thrown out from the narrow gardens, and with boxes that the scavengers clear. Spring and summer make their yearly attempt to beautify it, but each year the effort seems to fail more completely, though nature never tires of trying to do her best. It is pathetic to go along this disfigured little byway and remember what it was. Better never to return to the playing-fields of one's childhood than to return and find them such as this.

Not far away there was an old country-house, whose name

survives among the houses that stand upon its site. Nothing remains of it but the old stone balustrade of a terrace, adorned with two carved eagles holding shields, strangely out of keeping with the modern dwellings around them. It is just a lingering trace of the older time, of days of seclusion and household dignity. I can remember when this house was pulled down, and its surrounding gardens and orchards outraged. Rumour said that Cromwell had once passed a night here ; it is possible, for he had been in the neighbourhood. During the process of destruction the house and its precincts made a delightful playground for the boys of the district ; I don't suppose their presence was desired, but it was impossible to keep them out. I did not feel the pathos of it then as I should now ; but I felt the mystery, the sweet solitude of garden paths not yet quite desecrated, the old haunts with their clinging atmosphere of the bygone, into which we rambled with the watchful exhilaration that a boy feels when he thinks he is trespassing. Myth-making, suitable to our years, was not lacking. I recollect how we whispered together of strange things seen among the trees, and in dark nooks of the garden. There were cellars and dungeons beneath the old house, we believed ; the most innocent of cellarage had indeed its mystery when we peered about it in the dim summer twilights. Rumour said also that those who had begun to destroy the house had discovered a secret room, and in it was a dead old woman sitting at a table,—at least, I am sure about the old woman, but whether she was dead, or living in some mysterious perpetuity, I cannot remember. Boyish imagination did wonders with such a theme, and none of us would have ventured into the empty dismantled rooms alone. I was never bold enough to explore them thoroughly ; I liked it best in the open air, among the garden paths and the orchard trees that were bearing their last blossom. It is so long ago now ; though I remember powerfully, and the impression can never leave me, yet its details have become indistinct. My brother and myself had one particular comrade in those days. I remember how, when we came upon a half-destroyed outhouse and entered it, he, from some quaint sudden impulse, quoted the words,

Blood, blood he saw on every side,
But nowhere saw his child.

They were not appropriate, certainly not literally so ; but to my

somewhat sensitive fancy they came home with a directness that made me shudder. He went abroad in early manhood, and died. The place is now a mere commonplace assemblage of dwellings and formal roads; every nook and corner of its old-time seclusion has been long since violated. The romance is gone. Of course the many ordinary homes that now stand where formerly only one stood have their own store of romance, of tragedy and comedy, of bitter and of joyful daily experience; but they do not speak it to the passer-by as the poor dismantled homestead did. There may be lives here of the highest beauty,—the soul is not the creature of its surroundings, nor is it their creator,—but a new life has broken in; it is something like the inroads of democracy on the old stately and dignified solitudes of feudalism. We believe that it is progress, nursing a hope that the world passes from strength to strength; yet at times it is pleasant to go back, in imagination, and dream dreams of old-time loveliness among the mossy paths and orchard trees of the ancient homestead whose place knows it no more.

It needs a brave spirit to confront external changes without wincing. We do it better as we grow older, for we begin to expect nothing less; we have gained a sad habitude of consenting to impermanence. A youth of twenty, returning and noting the changes in his old haunts, will probably feel more sentimental and melancholy than a man of forty; the shock to his imagination will be so much greater, and his philosophic defence so much less. It takes such a very few years to change even the meadows and pastures that we knew intimately. I remember a small spring standing near the summit of some high fields; it has gone now so utterly that I cannot even find the exact spot. There was a low stone covering roofed with grass; grass grew thickly all round, and there were sedges, beloved of childhood, nourished by the moisture that welled over. With my earliest recollections I remember a story of a woman who had once drunk from this spring, and had swallowed a tiny snake with the water; and the snake had grown and grown till it became a terrible living and writhing presence within the woman, preying on her vitals, gnawing constantly,—like the bosom-snake in Hawthorne's tale. The story was just what a child would devour with eager horror. It may have been apocryphal; certainly it was an admirable way of impressing a child with the danger of indiscriminate water-drinking in the fields. I may sometimes in thirsty moments of indis-

cretion, have drunk from a brook, but it was always with a remembrance of the tradition lurking to destroy the pleasure of the drink, and a suspicion that I might have swallowed an embryo snake.

There was another well that played a notable part in my young imaginings. It stood by the roadside, with a few rustic cottages near it, just far enough away to be removed from the familiar and commonplace; it was very seldom that I saw it, and so it made the deeper impression. It was only an ordinary well with stone roofing, yet all the glamour that romance and superstition attach to wells and fountains was associated in my mind with this one. When I read of the Mermaiden's Well in *THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR*, I thought of this spot, so completely unlike in reality; and the same image was conjured up by the wonderful picture of a fountain in Hawthorne's *TRANSFORMATION*, the fountain that plays a part of exquisite symbolism in the tale of Donatello. I pass this wayside frequently now,—the circle of my journeyings is enlarged—and I never pass without something of a pang. The poor well has been utterly desecrated, the stones have broken away, the water is foul, the ground around is trampled and polluted; the spot is a mere damp disfigurement. It can no longer be a type of anything save of defilement, and of that we are never lacking in types. But the old imagery still lives in my heart; I can still see what I used to see, if I choose to ignore the outward reality and reach inward to a more permanent reality of the inner life.

There was a streamlet flowing at the base of some meadows; it flows there still, and, whether I wish it or no, it remains my type of all running brooks. But the place has sadly changed since the days when I paddled barefoot in the stream. It is sullied and trodden, and stained with refuse, no longer the limpid water that boyhood loved. Children still play around, and perhaps it satisfies them; in my mind it is like the defacement of an ideal, the pollution of a pure image, the defiling, worse than the removal, of a landmark in a child's happy meadowlands. It passed beneath a little foot-bridge, such as children always love. Further along, it flowed under the brick viaduct of a railway, being so shallow that in dry summers one could always pass through the archway dryshod, and even in the wettest seasons there were stepping-stones available. It was delightful to shout under this arch and hear the hollow sound. There were minnows and sticklebacks and tadpoles

to be fished for in this stream; tiny sandy coves where the smallest child could safely dabble, and deeper spots where boys could at least make a pretence of bathing. We used to journey thither with nets and bottles, returning with little but water and river-weed; the importance of the expedition was always great, and the upshot small, but the result to imagination and memory was not small. The very field that I remember most affectionately is now railed in; the children of to-day are driven away from it. There are rows of new houses close by; the solitary inn with its skittle-alley has become a public-house of the approved modern fashion. The younger children passed along the gloomy lane at its side with some trembling, peeping fearsomely through the tiles of the covered way where the balls were rolling. There was another leafy lane that led upwards, glorious with wild roses in the summer; it was called Dead Man's Lane, a name to fire the imagination of childhood. It is now lighted with gas-lamps which will soon probably give place to electricity.

I don't like to go to these places now; I never wish to see them again, except in dreams. In memory I can hold them inviolate; in reality, they have been outraged out of existence. When I see river-weeds and rushes my mind goes back here; all the rushes of eastern Broad-land, all the tumbling brooks of the Lake country, can do nothing better than recall these far more scanty reeds and water-brooks that impressed me, once for ever, in childhood. Beauty consists not in quantity or degree; it is there in the simplest meadow and the poorest little streamlet.

There are old playmates whom we like to think of better as they were than as they are; so it must be with places. Often there is a kind of duality about them; there is the place as it was to our first impressions, as it lives in association and memory, and as it is in reality. Sometimes there is a third picture,—the place as visited in the dreams of sleep. Our dream-localities are often quite different from the scenes as we know them awake. The name of the place remains the same, but the scenes are entirely distinct; and they continue so whenever our dreams revisit them. Are these scenes the impressions of things seen by the child in days before conscious memory could record them, or are they a transmission of heredity?

As years pass on, it seems almost necessary to become callous

and unfeeling, at least as regards outrages of memory and sentiment. Real sorrows cannot be evaded, but we can avoid the morbidity of excessive retrospection, and the inutility of passive sentimentality. Veil it as we will, we must live in the world of to-day ; yet it is not wrong, nor perhaps quite useless, to allow the mind sometimes to revert to the world of the past. We have leisure sometimes for such backward glances. Might not a disembodied spirit feel thus, in some possible future geologic age when man shall have departed from the earth,—if then there be memory and survival of personality, might not such a spirit wish to return, the wish itself being its accomplishment, and trace the sites of old towns and ancient homes of men among the wreckage of a changed world ? Whatever may be the spiritual glory of that future, might not such a spirit, for perhaps a little while, linger and feel a mystic sense of pathos ?

ARTHUR L. SALMON

I don't like to go to these places now ; I never wish to see those spots except in dreams. In memory I can hold them in vision ; in reality they have been cut out of existence. When I was a river-woman and rode my mare back here ; all the tribes of eastern Kentucky, all the tangled brooks of the lake country, and the rushing water, they will there for more than twenty years and water-fords that increased and once for more in childhood. Kentucky consists not in quantity or degree ; it is there in the simplest manner and the poorest little

These are old places where we like to think of better as they were than as they are ; so it must be with places. Only there is a kind of dream about them ; there is the place as it was in our first impressions, as it lives in association and memory, and as it is really. Sometimes there is a third picture—the place as it is in the dreams of sleep. Our dream-places are often quite different from the scenes as we know them awake. The scene of the future remains the same, but the scenes are truly different ; and they continue so whenever a new dream is told. And these scenes the images of things seen by the child in this before conscious memory could never tell them, or are they a transmission of history ?

As years pass on, it seems almost necessary to become callous

THE PRINCE'S EXPERIMENT

If you, being but a man, look into the eyes of the Princess Marguerite, you are lost. Therefore I, having more than a fair share of the weakness of my sex, turned an unappreciative but determined gaze on the ancient sundial, which is an interesting feature of her garden.

We were standing by the fish-pond, in which, should you care to look, you will see hundreds of the gayest and most splendid goldfish flashing hither and thither. The Princess was proud of her goldfish; and growing tired of the august beauties of the ancient sundial, I let my errant glance fall on the smooth surface of the pond at our feet. Alas for human precautions and the simple strategy of our hard-pressed sex! I had meant to admire the ever-varying charms of her Highness's gorgeous goldfish; but instead I found myself gazing, by favour of that liquid mirror, into the dangerous depths of her Highness's pleading eyes.

Of course I was lost at once; but I determined to capitulate with some show of dignity, and, if God pleased, of discretion.

"It's unlike you to refuse me," she said. I believe she knew I was caught. "There was a time in England, long ago, when you told me that my lightest wish spelt duty for you." It wasn't so very long ago either, but I didn't remind her.

Then, however, she was Lady Margaret Carlyon and a near neighbour of mine in Yorkshire. Now she was Princess Marguerite, wife of his Highness Prince Cedric the Eighth of Hohen-Lippenburg, and I was a humble secretary of the British Legation in her capital. Therefore it was a little unkind to remind me of what I had said (very rashly, not being a marrying man) once upon a time in England.

"Now, as then, I am your Highness's servant in all things," I answered, looking up at her. I was a lost man now, so further precautions were unnecessary. "But——"

"Oh yes," she took me up sharply; "you would give your

life for me, but—you would cut off your right hand for me, but—you would beard his Highness in his private room and force him to give way, but—oh, I congratulate you on your caution, sir. You are truly not the man to face Prince Cedric with your *buts*. Pooh, you are all alike with your brave words and empty deeds!" And she turned her back on me with a stamp of her foot and a toss of her head. I was sometimes rather glad she had married Prince Cedric.

And what was it all about? What was it that brought the warm colour to her face and the angry light to her wonderful eyes? What had made her send a servant to the Legation with a note, marked *urgent*, asking me to call and see her at once? Was it important and secret business of State, a plot against the Prince's life? Had her jewels been stolen or her husband proved unfaithful?

Why, no,—nothing of the sort: the Princess wanted her portrait painted by my friend George Pilkington, whom she had never seen, and Prince Cedric had refused to allow it. Old Eckstein, the court-painter, had been good enough for his sisters and his mother, said he, and ought to be good enough for his wife. Besides, she had had her portrait painted twice already, and he was hanged if he knew why she should want a third. Accordingly there had been a scene of some warmth, and the Prince had retired fuming to his private room, whither the outraged Marguerite heartlessly wished me to adjourn, to reason with her tyrannical lord.

Now her Highness's unnecessary allusion to that time "long ago" in England had led me back, by I do not know what train of thought, to a fancy-dress ball at our house in Yorkshire, at which she had looked very charming. She had chosen to dress as an idealised Tyrolese peasant. I had danced with her once or twice that night, I remember, and sat out with her,—well, more than once or twice, and—but dear, dear, I was very young then, and the Tyrolese peasant's dress was, as I have hinted, very charming.

"Do you remember," said I,—she had turned back and was standing close to me, looking into the fish-pond—"do you remember that fancy-dress ball, my sister's birthday ball, at our place, the year before you married?"

"Yes, of course I do," she answered, surprised. "Why?"

"Oh nothing,—you were rather nice that night, I remember; that's all. Nicer than——"

"I am now, I suppose. I don't think you've improved, you know."

"You were dressed as a peasant girl," I went on rather hurriedly.

"Yes, I remember ; and you said I looked nice, wasn't it ?"

"No, it wasn't."

She drew away a little. "Oh no," she said. "Now I think of it, it wasn't you at all ; it was Jack Burrows. He——"

"*Lovely* was the word," I remarked coldly.

"So it was ; it must have been you after all. You said you wished I was really a peasant instead of an heiress, because then——"

"Certainly the dress suited you," I put in.

"Because then you could prove to me——"

"I was only twenty," I pleaded ; "and the moonlight, you know."

"Prove to me, how truly you——"

"Don't," I said. Yes, it was a very pretty dress.

She was silent for a while. "But that was long ago," she then said.

"Not so very long ago." I was losing my head a little.

"I wish I *was* a peasant," she remarked presently.

"Why ?" I asked, rather alarmed, yet a little,—well,—pleased.

"Then I could have my portrait painted without any bother."

"Oh," said I, relieved, yet a little,—well,—disappointed. Nothing is perfect in this life.

"If you were you couldn't afford to," I added practically.

"It would be great fun," she said, taking no notice of my remark.

"What would ?"

"I wonder if he would know me."

"Who ?" I asked, mystified.

The Princess began to laugh ; she bubbled over with laughter.

"Oh it would be glorious ; only you must help me, you know."

"If your Highness would be good enough to explain," I began loftily.

"You said the dress suited me." I groaned. "And I'll tell him afterwards."

"Tell whom ?" said I despairingly.

"Why, Cedric."

"What will you tell him?"

"That Mr. Pilkington painted my portrait dressed as a peasant."

"Pilkington dressed as a peasant!" I gasped, much astonished.

"No, no, I will dress as a peasant, so that no one will know me, and Mr. Pilkington, who doesn't know me in any dress, will paint me."

Good God! Why had I ever mentioned that infernal ball and that—that—well, charming peasant's dress. Then a thought struck me. "Everyone in the palace would know you," I said triumphantly.

"Oh, we'll meet him at an old woodman's cottage which I know is empty, in the forest," she answered readily.

"We?" I repeated aghast.

"Of course. You must bring Mr. Pilkington; I'll bring old Countess Elsa, so as to be quite proper."

"Dressed as a peasant, too?" I grinned as I pictured the forbidding features of that stately dame.

"You're getting quite sharp," said the Princess, approvingly. "And you must tell Mr. Pilkington that you have found a peasant girl who is,—well,"—and she looked down,—"*nice*, was the word, wasn't it?"

"Lovely, I think," I corrected.

"Oh, well, as you like. And that you want him to paint her."

"No, I can't, really," said I, with a great show of firmness.

"You're right, it wasn't so very long ago," said she thoughtfully. "But I believe after all it was Jack Burrows who said that he wished——"

"Well, of course, if you insist," I said. You see, I had looked into the fish-pond.

"You're a dear," said the Princess.

Pilkington arrived next day. The same evening we were invited to a bachelor dinner at the Legation, to meet Prince Cedric. Now the Prince, when he chooses to be nice, is very nice indeed, and he was pleased on this occasion to take a kindly interest in Pilkington.

"I have heard your name, Mr. Pilkington," said his Highness, with a peculiar smile; "and I have looked forward with some,—er,—pleasurable curiosity to meeting you this evening."

"Your Highness is too good," replied the unconscious George, much flattered. "I had not imagined that my poor efforts had attained such fame."

Prince Cedric laughed a little. "I am bound to say," he remarked enigmatically, "that it was not so much on account of the work you have already accomplished, as of that which has not as yet fallen to your share."

My friend was, not unnaturally, mystified, but on reflection decided that the Prince was promising him a brilliant future. For myself I was a little uncomfortable, for his Highness as he made the observation had looked over George's shoulder at me, and his eyes, as they met mine, had in them a sort of sarcastic amusement that was decidedly disconcerting.

The following day was that which the Princess had set aside for the first scene in what she was pleased to call our comedy. I accordingly called for Pilkington at his hotel. He was in bed when I got there, and it was only when I promised to show him something exceptional in the way of female beauty that he consented to come out with me. On the way, which lay through one of the Prince's forests, he plied me with questions, many of them embarrassing; nor did I find it easy to put him off. "Does she live with her father?" he asked in irrelevant response to my eulogy of the surrounding scenery.

"No; her father lives some miles away," I replied, which was indeed the case, for he lives in Yorkshire. "In a moment we shall be there."

And then the sentence was cut short at my lips for there, visible as we turned a corner, not fifty yards ahead of us, stood the Prince, waiting. For whom? For what? Even in the short moment, before he turned and saw us, and seeing, stayed silent till we reached him, I had time to ask myself the question, Waiting for whom?

For a second after we had reached him and stood bareheaded he looked at us hard and smiled, a trifle grimly, I thought. Then, motioning us to be covered, he cried: "Well met, gentlemen, well met. This is indeed an unexpected pleasure. It is our woodland scenery, no doubt, which has attracted you, Mr. Pilkington. You are an admirer of the picturesque?"

"In all its varieties, your Highness," assented George, heartily.

"Ah," replied Prince Cedric dryly. "If you continue your walk, taking that turning to the right, you will come in view of

a most delightful bit of scenery. And as you appreciate so ardently the,—er,—beauties of nature, you will the more easily forgive me for depriving you of Mr. Blake's company. I have a matter of some importance to discuss with him."

Beckoning me to follow him, his Highness bowed slightly to the astonished George and began to stroll off in the direction we had come. As there was nothing for it but to acquiesce, with a look which I meant to be charged with warning, but which to George must have been entirely meaningless, I walked after the Prince, the most puzzled and anxious man that day in Lippenburg. For surely the Prince knew, surely it could not be chance that brought him there that day, at that hour? Yet, if he knew, why did he leave Pilkington alone, and direct him, as he had, to the cottage? Or, was it a trap? Would he find, not the Princess, but,—something else? And then suddenly I was afraid, and I opened my mouth to plead, to assure Cedric that George knew nothing. It was a harmless joke,—but before I could form the words, the cold calm voice of the Prince brought me back to sanity and reason.

"Your chief, Mr. Blake, has spoken to me of you, on more than one occasion, in the highest terms. In fact so much have I been impressed by your ability and good sense, that I have persuaded him to entrust you with a piece of business which will involve your departure for London immediately. It concerns a question which has been under discussion between your Government and myself for some months, and which I wish, if possible, to bring to a speedy termination." I heaved a grateful sigh of relief. This intention of sending me away, which should have alarmed me most, curiously enough, at the moment banished my fears. "I am fortunate to have met you," he continued. "I have a carriage near at hand, if you will forgive my want of ceremony and accompany me to the Legation, you will oblige me greatly."

The Prince had found, unwittingly as I prayed and thought, the one weak spot in my armour. If the Princess's design was known to him, intervention on my part would be useless. If, on the other hand, he knew nothing, obedience was the surest way to avoid suspicion.

At the Legation I received my instructions; I was to conclude matters at the earliest possible moment, and, in any case, return in three weeks' time.

Leaving a note at the KAISERDHOF, informing George that urgent business involved my immediate departure, and begging him earnestly to give the woodman's hut a wide berth during my absence, I caught the express and left Schönbürg. And as the train glided out of the station I mentally entrusted Pilkington and the Princess to Providence and their own folly, cursing fish-ponds and Tyrolese peasants with emphatic fervour.

* * *

"Shall I," wrote George, the next day, "shall I paint her portrait first and fall in love with her afterwards? Or shall I fall in love first and then paint a portrait which will be no more like her than a pretty woman is as a rule like an angel, thank Heaven! I shall paint the portrait first and begin to-morrow. For you, oh jealous fugitive" (so much for my note of warning!) "do you know her fickleness? Have you sounded her shallows? 'Where is your friend?' she asked anxiously; and then with relief, such a pleased sigh and a smile (I must begin the portrait without fail to-morrow), she went on, 'Well, it is better fun without him.' The mother, a fearsome dame" (oh Countess Elsa, did your ears burn?), "left us after a few minutes."

I only had one other letter from him and that after a week's interval. I extract one sentence from it. "The portrait progresses famously. 'Shallows,' did I say? Fool that I was! What depths, what depths!"

* * *

On my return to Schönbürg, Pilkington met me at the station. Giving my luggage into my servant's charge, I decided that we should walk home. I at once asked George about the portrait. "I shall finish it to-morrow," he replied, "and I believe it is good work." He paused. "I am equally certain that it is a complete failure."

I gazed on him in astonishment. "Of course I am not an artist," I remarked, "but still, I suppose explanation is possible."

"No, it isn't; that's just the puzzle. I can't be quite certain, of course. You see, when I paint a portrait the last sitting is far and away the most important. It is rather like the unveiling of a picture; the success or failure is not apparent until the thing is absolutely finished."

"But you say this is going to be both."

"It is hard to explain," he answered, "but it is this way. The personality of the girl seems to have escaped me. Yet I feel that I know her thoroughly. She herself does not strike me particularly as out of keeping with her surroundings, but the girl I am putting on the canvas does."

"My dear George," said I, "you are a trifle obscure."

"You see," he explained, "a true portrait should show you the moral character, the self of the sitter. It should portray the soul, shining through the body, the visible person."

"Well, then, all you mean is, to put it shortly, that the character and temperament of the girl are out of touch with her environment."

"That's what I have said to myself, but it doesn't satisfy me."

We were walking along the principal street. At this moment there was a lull in the traffic, and I noticed the men among the passers-by baring their heads. I glanced round and there was the Princess driving by.

"Who is it?" asked George. I told him. "Haven't you seen her before?" I added innocently. "No," he answered, with a puzzled expression; "yet I could swear I know her face." I hastened to change the subject.

At first I was amazed at his failure to recognise her. Then I remembered he had told me once before that, while painting, he became so absorbed in his work, extracting as it were the soul from the body of his subject and putting it on the canvas, that he had often felt afterwards as though the outward and visible form was that of a complete stranger. He recorded the personality, incidentally clothed in flesh. On arrival at the Legation, finding I was to go immediately and report direct to the Prince, I drove straight to the palace. His Highness received me in his private room and I proceeded to make my report. I noticed that, although he displayed his usual capacity and acumen, it was with an obvious effort that he succeeded in concentrating his attention on the matter in hand. When I had finished he asked me a few questions, and then sat silent, hesitating, it seemed, to dismiss me.

As I waited, I looked with interest at this man. In the prime of life, with a remarkable capacity for governing, a keen intellect and enormous physical energy, Prince Cedric, though possessed of great personal attraction, was something of an enigma. He

had no close friends ; perhaps this was a necessary incident of his position, but he was distinguished by a certain impenetrable aloofness, which rendered him singularly difficult of approach. He had been noted in early youth for recklessness and extraordinary personal courage ; there had also been one or two scandals, but more lately he had astonished Europe by his astute diplomacy and statesmanship.

Presently he spoke. "I wonder, Mr. Blake, whether you have the slightest idea why I had you sent to London on this mission." I confessed that I had been puzzled by his somewhat unusual action. "To tell you the truth," the Prince continued, "I was anxious to try a little experiment, and your absence simplified matters considerably."

"In short, your Highness wanted me out of the way?"

"Precisely. You see I knew all about your little plot with my wife, and it occurred to me that you had innocently put into my hand a weapon of which I was in need."

To say I was alarmed, as well as mystified, would be a mild way of describing my state of mind. Then dropping the sarcastic tone which he habitually used, Cedric began to speak with a new earnestness, compelling my attention. "Mr. Blake, I know you and I like you. I am a strong man and I have no friends ; I stand alone ; it is my prerogative and my pleasure to hold myself apart from my fellows. But I am going to throw for a big stake, and, so much I think is due to you, you are to be with me. I am about, therefore, to speak to you as I have never spoken to living man before." He paused for a moment and then went on. "I believe you knew my wife intimately in England, both prior to and at the time of her marriage?" I answered that that was so. "As man to man, Mr. Blake, was it your opinion that, at the time of her marriage, the Princess was what is usually termed 'in love' with me?"

I hesitated ; but his earnestness and the searching glance or his keen eyes wrung an answer from my unwilling lips. "As man to man, sir, it struck me that her feeling was one of admiration and, pardon me, of fear, rather than of love towards your Highness."

"And you were right," answered the Prince. "When I met Lady Margaret Carlyon, I knew that out of all the world she was a fitting wife for me ; with her alone, I felt, could I adequately

share my life. Had I been as other men, had I had more leisure and I may add more patience, I should have set out first to win her love. As it was,—I will speak plainly, Mr. Blake—by strength of will and force of character I compelled her to become my wife. I doubt if she ever even asked herself if she loved me. But I knew, I knew I did not hold her heart. Mr. Blake, I have often asked myself whether a man who by sheer force of will could compel a woman to admire, respect, look up to him, to be his wife, could by the same means also compel her love." He struck his open hand upon the table. "I think he could; but that I would not do. What I can take by right, I will only take as the free gift of her willing love, not forced, not wrung from her, but freely given. I must win her love; I will not steal it." He was silent for a moment, and I sat overwhelmed by the passion and rude greatness of this man, to the world so repressed, so cynical, so cold. He changed his position slightly and went on. "Lately, I have seen that her love is there, dormant, unawakened. And you have given me, you and she together, have given me my chance; I know the risk I run and she runs, but I believe my place in her heart is secure enough to justify me. To make her love a living thing something is needed, something sudden, unexpected, out of the ordinary run and rut of everyday events." He leant forward and placed his hand upon my sleeve. "If, Mr. Blake, where all the world would, if it knew, condemn, I understood? If, where every sane and reasonable man would doubt, I trusted? Do you not think my supreme faith would destroy the final barrier?"

Then, at last, I saw, and sat silent, amazed at the wildness of the scheme and the risk,—and at his cleverness (for I knew her), his cleverness in seizing the opportunity her own waywardness had placed within his reach.

He read my face and in a moment his manner changed and he was the cold, scoffing, cynical man I had always known once more. "You understand, I see; it is an interesting psychological experiment. If you will oblige me by calling at the palace at three to-morrow afternoon, Mr. Blake, we will continue the walk which I was unfortunate enough to interrupt the other morning."

And so I was dismissed.

* * * * *

Of course the Countess Elsa had betrayed us. I came to that conclusion as I walked beside the Prince through the woods next day. I learnt afterwards that he had compelled her to feign illness. Unknown to his wife, Cedric had arranged for her to have ample leisure to go frequently to the forest and so, unconsciously as she thought, had facilitated the deception she was practising. Her own obstinacy and recklessness, added to a sense of the purity of her motives, would be quite enough to induce her to fly in the face of conventionality. And I half suspected a glow of pleasure as the thought crossed her mind that she might be playing with fire.

The Prince scarcely spoke as we walked along the broad grass avenues, on which the sun cast patches of light and shade as it filtered through the overhanging trees. At last we came to the spot where three weeks before we had left Pilkington standing. A few steps and a turn in the path brought us in sight of the woodman's hut. The door stood open. It was a lonely place and the occupants might well consider themselves free from interruption.

I glanced at Cedric. The sun shone full on him, lighting up the dark, imperious face, softening a little the usually hard features. I could read nothing from his countenance, but I knew my heart was thumping and my breath was coming fast as, our footsteps falling silently on the soft grass, we walked slowly forward.

Advancing to the door, which opened immediately into the living room of the cottage, his Highness stood on the threshold, surveying the scene before him with an expression wherein anger and amusement were curiously blended.

The portrait, which stood on an improvised easel near the further window, first seized my attention. It was finished, and even my inexperience could see it was a masterpiece. If ever the world should see it, Pilkington would become the foremost portrait-painter of the day. Yet, he had been right when he had described it as a failure; he might have said, a splendid failure. Though it was faithful in every line, though the peasant's dress, the quaint way of doing her hair, the attitude, were all the property peculiar to the peasant, the face and in fine the portrait, as such, was the portrait of no peasant in the world. It stood there awedly, undisguisedly, her Highness Princess Marguerite. Hers was the poise of the head, hers and

hers only the proud eyes, with their underlying half hid expression of raillery and coquetry ; hers in short was the personality.

I am no artist, and I find it hard to explain wherein George had so signally succeeded where he had failed. He had set out to paint the portrait of a peasant-girl ; and in this he had failed. It was no peasant, none could mistake for a peasant the figure which stood before us on the canvas. The disguise of the Princess had been perfect ; it would have deceived the most wary. She was a born actress, and had played her part to perfection. Yet Pilkington had painted the peasant's dress and in it the Princess in being. And as the picture stood there, in the convincing light of the afternoon sun which shone through the window, it struck us fair and square between the eyes of our intelligence as a confession. He knew, Pilkington knew, whom he had painted. He could not look on his own handiwork and deny his knowledge.

Cedric, as I have said, stood in the doorway grimly surveying the scene before him. Neither the Princess nor Pilkington had noticed our presence. They were both near the easel, between it and the window. George was kneeling holding her hand, while she stood looking down at him.

"So you know," she said slowly, and I think we all recognised that it was the Princess, not the peasant, who spoke.

"Too late," George answered, in a hoarse voice,—yet whether he meant that the knowledge came too late, or that it was too late to draw back from his course, I did not know—"too late, and you know too, what you have done."

"I am,—sorry," she whispered. And it was neither the Princess nor the peasant who spoke now, it was the best in her, the woman, and in the simple bald sentence was a world of meaning, of repentance, of regret. "I am,—sorry ; it was thoughtless, foolish,—oh I was a fool ! And it is,—too late."

"And the price ?" he answered in the same low, hoarse voice. "And the price ?"

"That was folly and worse than folly. Surely you see that ? I kiss only the man I love."

"And who is that ? Ah, Madam," said George,—he had risen to his feet—"you owe me that at least ; who is it ?"

Her face for a second grew warm and then pale and she opened her lips to answer him. But while the word trembled on them, before she could make a sound, Cedric had stepped lightly across

the room and stood, hat in hand, bowing before her. Then he straightened himself and stepping back a pace, stood looking at them with a mocking smile.

"And the price, and the price, Madam?" said he. "Surely you must pay for work done, and well done, I think," and he turned to the portrait with a critical air. "A very striking work, very striking indeed," he continued. "Really, sir, I must congratulate you; it would be an ornament to any,—peasant's dwelling. Portrait of a Peasant Girl, painted by her lover! And in which of your houses do you propose to hang it, if I may ask?" He stepped nearer to the easel, examining the picture closely. "Really, extremely interesting. I think I told you, sir, that I was interested in the work, even before its inception. I should immensely like to know, at what stage in the,—er,—proceedings you discovered whom you were painting. But I suppose you won't tell me, eh?" And he turned his smiling glance on George.

"I did not know, sir," he stammered, "believe me——"

"That is exactly where I am in doubt," responded his Highness blandly. "Are you a fool, or are you a knave? You can hardly emerge from your remarkable adventure,—if, that is to say, you do emerge from it—without a claim to one or other of these titles. But come, Madam, come, the price, the price. You must pay the artist for his work; you must not take his time and leave him to starve. Pay, pay, Madam; I would not have you backward in settling your debts," and he turned to his wife and smiled with a sort of ferocious merriment which appalled us all.

The Princess, after the first shock of surprise, had remained motionless, following her husband's every gesture with eager, questioning eyes. Now she moved forward. "But,—you do not know, sir. I promised,—it was a joke,—I promised——"

"To kiss him, wasn't that it?" he broke in roughly. "Then for Heaven's sake kiss him. The man you loved, I think you said? Then kiss him, Madam. Where is the difficulty?" Then, as she hesitated, he added, "I order you to fulfil your word."

"I cannot, I cannot," she muttered. And then her mood changed. The question in her eyes was answered, and, like a woman, heedless of all the circumstances which excused him, she hardened her heart and holding her head high, looked him in the face. "And I will not," her voice rang firm and clear. "Sir, I have been wrong throughout this miserable travesty, but at

least here I am in the right. And you should take shame to yourself that you of all men should ask me to do this thing."

For a moment I saw a wonderful light shine in Prince Cedric's eyes, and his whole countenance was softened. Then, like a veil, an expression of sullen scorn covered his face, and he turned to her with sombre eyes, his teeth showing in a sneering smile. "What, Madam," he growled with sudden fury, "you will and you will not? You stick at honour, is it that? or you feel a tardy shame, is it that? Had you no sense of the injury you risked to my honour, when you began what you call a travesty, but what is like to end in tragedy? Had you no sense of shame when you made this promise to this man? And now you refuse to pay the price and stick at this and that!"

She shrank back from him as he took a step forward, his chin thrust out, his eyes sombre and smouldering, glaring into hers. What was this new manner? Where were the coldness, the repression to which she had been used? For the rest of us too, even for me, it was a surprise. Hitherto in the little drama he had been unconsidered, unthought of; he had been cast for no part. Now he filled the stage; in his hands lay the end and the result. What our feelings were, in the tense silence which followed, I fancy I can guess.

My attention had been particularly caught by the Prince's question to Pilkington. At what stage had he discovered whom he was painting? On this hung much. Had he known or at least guessed from the first, even when he met her? Had his behaviour with me yesterday been mere acting? Or, in the opposite extreme of possibility, had the knowledge come to him only when, freed from the absorption of his work, he had gazed at the completed picture, and from the evidence of his own success gathered the truth of her identity. And his feelings,—ah, in a flash I saw that here was the truth. The knowledge of both these things had come to him suddenly, that day, even perhaps as we came in, and looking at his face she had read the unspoken words, and awakened, she too, to the element of reality, and, as Cedric had said, of tragedy, in what had begun so lightly.

And Pilkington,—I fancy, for a moment, the half covered threat in Cedric's words, "if you do emerge," held his attention; but in a second it had veered again to the Princess. What would she do? Would she obey this dominating will which had entered the quiet room like a current of strong wind, and shame

them all? Or would she break her word, or,—and then stung into action by a fresh thought, he raised his head and spoke abruptly to her. "Madam, I absolve you from the price, which in fact was what I asked, not what you offered."

"Silence!" thundered Prince Cedric, in an awful voice. The whole violence and virility of the man's nature seemed to burst the bounds which he had so rigidly set it during his married life. I remembered the tales of a wild, hot youth, of passions unrestrained, and temper ungoverned. He strode the length of the room once, twice, in obvious agitation. Then on a sudden, he brought up short before his wife.

"Well, Madam," he said abruptly, "to resume the interesting conversation which my arrival interrupted. You were asked a question; we await the answer with interest. Who is it?" And under the dull gloom of his eyes was evident a flicker of anxiety, which I think I alone noted. "Who is it that you love?" and he came nearer, putting his two hands on her shoulders and pushing his face within an inch of hers.

She did not shrink, but her colour came and went, and she trembled violently. Then suddenly she pointed at George. "I love him," she answered, her voice vibrating with passion, "I love him,—not you, sir, not you. Strike me, kill me if you will, and go."

There was dead silence for a minute, while he stared and stared into her face, as though he would read with his eyes what he had heard with his ears, as though he would verify that which he would not even yet believe. Then, with a growl like that of a wild beast, half rage, half pain, he flung her from him, sending her reeling to the wall, and turning he stood and looked at George. What an end to his scheming! What bitter humiliating defeat, where he had looked for high triumph! What a reward for his faith, that faith which was to shake her love to life!

George stood and waited for the storm to break, in a silence that seemed to last a lifetime. Then he put his hand in his pocket, took out a small revolver, and crossing the room laid it on the table by the Prince. "It is your right, Sir," he said simply, and again stood waiting. Then Cedric spoke, low and slowly, as though in pain. "Listen, sir. When I met you out there, three weeks ago, I knew; and I trusted,—her, not you. Daily I saw her go,—to you; daily I saw her return,—from you. Still I trusted; I had faith in her, such faith as never man had in woman.

And, to-day, that which by my faith and confidence I would have won, and which was mine by right, you have taken. I was wrong ; I tried her too highly, and I forgive,—so, go, sir. For her sake, go, and never let me see your face again."

Once more, for a moment there was silence. Then before George could move or speak, there was the quick rustle of a woman's dress and the low tones of a woman's voice. "You knew, Cedric? Ah, say it again. You knew?" She had come close and put her hands on his arm looking into his face.

"Ay, I knew," he muttered. He seemed dazed, his head sunk upon his breast.

"And you trusted," she said, "you trusted? Say that again too, Cedric."

"Ay, I trusted," he repeated. "God knows, I trusted."

"And day by day you saw me go and come, and knew what the world would say, if it heard, and what any man among all men, but one, would think. You knew all that, and still you trusted?"

"Ay, still I trusted," he muttered, like a man broken.

The woman's voice fell lower still, scarcely more than a whisper, yet very clear. "Cedric, I have lied to you. Foolishly, wickedly I began, foolishly, wickedly I have ended. I began with a lie, and I have ended with a lie. But it is over now, Cedric, and,—I kiss only the man I love. May I kiss you, my lord?" She hung on his neck and with streaming eyes looked into his face. "Ah, forgive, forgive," she whispered.

"But," muttered the Prince, like a man wakened from sleep, "you said you loved him ; you pointed to him ; 'I love him,'—they were your very words."

"Oh, Cedric," and she laughed and sobbed and laughed again ; "oh, Cedric, do you know a woman so little? I have heard different tales. Why, dear, had the veriest country clod stood where he stood in that moment I would have said the same."

Then gradually he raised his head, and his face, so close to hers, took on the reflection of her love, glorified with the purest light that can shine on any human countenance, like unto the face of an angel. And he looked into her eyes. "Kiss me," he whispered hoarsely.

G. T. MOSTYN BURKITT

THE BOOMERANG, THE BUNYIP AND THE COAL-SACK

THREE things there are that the Australian aboriginal has made peculiarly his own, the boomerang, the bunyip, and the coal-sack. In the inner circles of certain erudite societies his claim to be regarded as the originator of the boomerang is firmly combated, but the general public admit the claim unhesitatingly, until the weapon ranks almost as the sign-manual of the race. The bunyip has a lesser recognition, due more to want of knowledge than to the claim of any rival community. The coal-sack is in the same position as the bunyip, only more so; to half the world it is in itself an object beyond the range of sense-cognisance and to the majority of the other half,—the half so situated as to be able to consciously realise it—the part it plays in the cult of the blackfellow is unknown.

One other thing there also is that is unique in the Australian, though in this instance it is not the possession, but the absence of the possession by him of a human implement to be found in every other part of the world, and among every other race of people. That a people with wit enough to realise the mechanical properties of the boomerang, imagination enough to invent the bunyip, and poetry enough to idealise the coal-sack, should have existed throughout the long ages of the past without grasping the value as a weapon, in either hunting or warfare, in offence or defence, of the simple bow and arrow, is well-nigh inconceivable. Yet it is true. Alone among the races and tribes of men upon the face of the earth, the blackfellow ignores the bow and arrow, despite the fact that the inhabitants of islands, within a comparatively short distance of his own coasts, are among the finest and most powerful archers humanity has produced. Throughout the Pacific Islands the bow and arrow will everywhere be found; in New Guinea it is

the staple weapon ; in the Prince of Wales's Islands, just off the northern coast of Australia, the natives shoot a six-foot arrow from a bow a white man can barely draw. But the aboriginal Australian is as innocent of archery as he is of mathematics.

Nor is the failure due to the want of suitable indigenous wood for the manufacture of the bows, nor of fibre for the bowstrings, nor of canes and reeds for arrows. The same plants are to be found in Australia which are used to form the bows of one of the most powerful arrow-shooting tribes of New Guinea, a tribe that held a band of white men, armed with Winchester repeaters, helpless to advance within three hundred yards of their stronghold, the flight of the arrows and the accuracy of aim determining the fate of anyone foolhardy enough to enter within that danger-zone. It was in the early days of the Australian occupation of the island that the incident occurred and "Travellers' tales" was the general verdict until, in later years, there came corroboration. When Sir William McGregor penetrated to the interior to carry out the work he did so well of checking, if not staying, the slaughter of tribe by tribe, of white men by natives, and of natives by white men, he came within the territory of the mighty bowmen. The effective shooting and accurate aim were again made manifest at a range of three hundred yards. In the subsequent palaver between the native chief and the white ruler, the former was treated to a display of marksmanship by the best shots of the party, and was invited, in turn, to show what he could do with the great bow he carried. Marvelling at the ease with which the bow was sprung, and inclined to believe the force imparted to the speeding arrow was due more to some peculiarity in the spring of the wood than to the sheer strength of the man, Sir William asked that he might try the bow himself. Although a man of wiry muscular strength and in perfect physical condition, he found he could not draw the bow for more than a third of the length of the arrow. Yet with less exertion the native drew it to the full extent and shot with unimpaired aim, suggesting the possession of a muscular faculty which could only have been acquired after many generations of heredity.

As in the interior, so also on the coast of New Guinea, the bow and arrow is the perfected weapon of the tribes ; but on the mainland of Australia the weapon is not only unknown, but fails to appeal to the aboriginal even when he is brought in

contact with it. In the case of the Prince of Wales's Islanders, they have always been held to their islands and prevented by the blackfellows of the mainland from extending their dominion to the continent, in spite of the fact that the continental blackfellow had only shield and spear to pit against the flights of well-aimed six-foot arrows.

It may be due to prejudice, it may be due to ignorance, it may be due to inability to comprehend and wield the double weapon ; but to whatever cause it is to be attributed, the fact remains that on the mainland of the continent bows and arrows are unknown, while men wield the boomerang as it was wielded by the men who lived in Egypt centuries before Thebes or Memphis were built. Wherefore is it difficult to trace the origin of this curiosity,—difficult, that is, for a white man. The blackfellow claims to know whence it came and treasures the knowledge in a legend which is not altogether without a trace of poetical imagination.

"Plenty long ago," was the beginning of the story as the writer heard it, "Plenty long ago" the moon was a beautiful lubra (or girl) living in peace with her tribe, while the sun was a fierce warrior of another tribe. The warrior, desiring the lubra as a wife, followed the orthodox aboriginal method of courtship and sought to pounce upon her unawares, with the kindly intention of knocking her on the head and carrying her off to his gunyah or hut. But the lubra was opposed to his attentions and, in order to protect herself from his keen searching eyes, she wrapped herself in a rug of black opossum skins, peeping round the edge of it a little at a time, lest he should be lurking near, see her, and carry her off. Sometimes he did see her, just a glimpse of her cheek, or the curve of her brow, as she peered round the corner of the rug. Then would he pounce upon her, but ever was she able to dodge back behind the shelter of the rug and so elude him, for when she vanished behind the rug he was confounded, and could only wander about wondering how she had escaped him.

For many days he pursued his fruitless quest, and then grew morose and melancholy at the threatened failure of his enterprise. He had proclaimed, ere he set out, the object of his quest, and how could he go back alone and empty-handed save to be made the butt of all the ridicule and the subject of all

the contempt of every member of the tribe? Every time he had a glimpse of her face peering round the sheltering rug he sprang forward to seize her; every time the face vanished before he could get his hands upon it, and only did he grasp the air. Then he became angry and sulky and vowed he would try for her no more. Wearied by his struggles he lay down and slept, then and there.

The lubra, crouching under the shelter of her rug, listened for his raging footsteps to pass on. For a long time she listened but heard nothing, and then, like all gins, being more curious than crafty, she must needs peep round the edge of the rug to see what the silence meant. The warrior, lying still, saw the gleam of her face and gathered himself, silently, for a spring. With her curiosity unsatisfied the lubra peeped further, and the warrior, impatient in his anger, leaped at her. His hands caught at her face with a mighty grip, but she, terrified at the sight of him, flung herself back with so much vigour that the edge of her face broke off in the warrior's hands. Then did his rage burst all bounds, and with a yell he flung the thing he held down upon the earth, flying back to his own tribe lest the lubra should call the warriors of her tribe to come and slay him. The fragment broken from her face lay where it fell, till, later, men found it. Idly one picked it up and, marvelling what it could be, flung it from him. At once it whirled up through the air, striving to get back to the face whence it had been torn. Round and round it travelled, as black cockatoos travel when they start on a long journey, but going farther and faster than ever anything thrown by man went before, until it suddenly plunged downwards and stuck in the earth at the feet of the blackfellow who had thrown it. Again he picked it up and again he threw it, and then his comrades tried it, always with the same result, until the men, fearing "plenty debbil debbil" was in it, called a great gathering of the tribes to discuss it. To solve the problem each man attending the corroboree tried to fashion an imitation of the strangely whirling thing, and when they all succeeded they laughed. They did not know that what had been found was a part of the moon's face, nor that its long flight was its effort to get back to its proper place. Neither did they know that the warrior, in revenge on the lubra, made all the imitations travel in the same way, so that when the moon looked down

and saw them all whirling in the air towards her she would not know which one was the missing piece of her face, and so would remain disfigured for ever.

In proof of the truth of his tale the blackfellow would point to the moon, when not at the full, and ask how else it had lost a part. On nights when the moon was full the blackfellow was silent.

In other parts of Australia there are other legends explaining how the boomerang came, but the tribe to which the legend of the broken moon belonged was one whose territory, in the period before the advent of the white man, ranged along the coast of what is now Queensland, where, from time to time, there must have come men, bow-and-arrow men, from the not far distant islands. But to the blackfellow who told the legend a bow and arrow were foolish things, more childish than the reed spears with which the piccaninnies played. He, in the strength of his agile manhood, and with the aid of a favourite womerah, could send a long spear, tipped with palm-wood, through a deal plank an inch thick a hundred yards away. In his skill as a fighting man he would stand with only the womerah in his hand while the younger men of the tribe hurled their sharpened spears at him as quick and as fast as they chose. Using the womerah as a fencer uses a broadsword, he would turn aside every spear that came straight for him and ignore the others. Spears, he said, came in short flights, heavy and swift, but they could not touch him, a warrior of the fighting days; what use would it be, then, to send the little piccaninny reed spears at him? They were no good, no good; they would not hurt a kangaroo-rat. Moreover, there was the bunyip,—what would happen to a man who was only armed with the little reed spears if he came face to face with the bunyip?

To the aboriginal mind the bunyip is the acme of all that is hideous and terrifying. Difficult as it is to arrive at a definite solution of the problem how the boomerang came to his hands, it is still more difficult to trace the origin of the bunyip. The belief in it is as widespread as the knowledge of the boomerang, but always is the description of the animal vague, incoherent, and shadowy. A blackfellow is not deficient in imaginative inventiveness; where he errs is in the abundance of his detail. When he sets out to describe the myth, the animal may possess horns like an ox, thick red hair, claws in place of feet, and a tail

like that of an alligator; half way through the story the fur gives place to scales, the tail shrinks so that there is room for the mighty kicks of the great hind legs, the horns are forgotten in favour of a long curling forked tongue, and the head changes to that of a very ugly man,—and a blackfellow's idea of ugliness is in itself a conundrum to the white man. The mere variation of description ought to be enough to demonstrate to the superior intelligence of the white man that the bunyip is a myth, surviving, perhaps, from some pre-historic legend of a dragon, or a tale of an Eastern monster which has filtered through from race to race until finally it reached Australia by the mouth of a castaway. But the white man is not always so critical as he might be, and many are the places on the Southern continent where at intervals there comes the bunyip scare.

At one time an outlying district in Victoria made an effort to win undying fame by capturing the bunyip: it is always *the* bunyip; no matter how often one is reported, nor at how many different points, no man dreams of admitting, even by the use of an indefinite article, that there is more than one. The particular incident in Victoria was at a big swampy lagoon, so thickly overgrown with reeds that there was only a clear patch in the centre, just visible from a distant rise. No one having penetrated far enough through the reeds to test the depths of the open water, the inhabitants generally averred that it was bottomless. When, therefore, a belated traveller arrived at the local store one evening, and told how he had heard a terrible noise, half bellow and half shriek, and had heard the reeds being trampled down as though by a huge slow-moving body, everyone was ready with the information that the centre of the lagoon, being bottomless, must be the home of the bunyip, which monstrous creature was undoubtedly the cause of the sounds the traveller had heard. Stimulated by the tales the traveller and others told, the people of the district grew enthusiastic to capture the bunyip while it was in the lagoon, or, failing capture, to slay it.

With the rising of the sun on the following day the more ardent set out for the lagoon, to be joined later by the rest of the male population. As they circled round the wide expanse of waving reeds each man heard for himself the grim unearthly sounds coming at intervals from the centre of the lagoon; he heard, also, the reeds rustle and snap as the mysterious some-

thing forced a passage through them. There could be no doubt, in the face of so much corroboration, of the tale the traveller had told ; but no one succeeded in catching sight of the mysterious something itself, nor were tentative efforts to push an attack upon it through the dense growth of reeds more successful. The best part of the day was lost in these spasmodic efforts, until someone started the idea that combined action, systematically pursued, would alone give them the triumph they desired.

They camped at the lagoon that night, hearing at intervals the strange sounds which everyone felt could only be made by the bunyip. Round the camp-fire there came debate, and slowly the opinion grew general that if the prize were to be secured one course must first be followed. They must cut down the reeds, cut them down until none were left to give the monster shelter. Then there would be no hope for it to escape capture, dead or alive. To the hunters it was immaterial how the creature was secured so long as it was available for exhibition ; for it came to them that the proceeds of such an exhibition would help them to become rich quicker than they could ever hope to do by the growing of maize and pumpkins. The definite plan of campaign was adopted, and the next morning saw it commenced with the dawn. The reeds were steadily cut down. Towards the afternoon, as the advancing ring of cutters grew narrower and narrower, sharp-shooters kept a watch for a glimpse of the monster. The lagoon being barely a foot deep, progress was not difficult, until, through the last of the reeds, the patch of open water became visible. But there was no sign of the bunyip, only smooth unruffled water. One heroic spirit pushed his way through the reeds and gingerly felt his way, step by step, lest he should suddenly plunge into the bottomless hole and fall an easy victim to the monster lurking in the depths. His comrades watched with bated breath, every firearm ready to send the bunyip to his doom should he raise his head above the pool. With slow and cautious tread the pioneer advanced into the open water and pushed on, step by step, until he found himself among the reeds on the other side of the soundless pool, the water of which had never reached above his knees. There he turned and looked back. A streak of mud, staining the otherwise clear pool, showed where he had made his way. There was no bottomless hole ; there was no monster. But the man on whose land the

lagoon was situated made no complaint ; his stock could reach the water so much easier now that the reeds were gone.

Faith in the bunyip is not so strong in that part of Victoria to-day, but elsewhere the myth finds credence. Recently a bunyip-chase was organised along the banks of the Latrobe River, this time the creature having been seen ; at least a description of it was published. It was a creature with a long tail and a short neck, dusky fur and a protruding tongue, and it breathed in short panting gasps. There is a paucity of detail in the description that suggests the white man rather than the blackfellow ; for while the latter would have given sufficient to construct half a dozen different animals, no one can build up a complete figure out of a tail, a neck, some fur, a tongue, and a method of breathing. Far inferior is it to the description given by an Australian novelist, who wrote :—

The head was that of a man, with huge teeth showing through its mouth, and the eyes green and phosphorescent. The arms were long and the hands were shaped like the forefeet of a kangaroo, with long claws at the ends of the fingers. Below the waist the limbs were formed like those of a crocodile, and there was an immense tail, frilled along the top with a double row of jagged plates, shaped and standing up like the teeth of a huge cross-cut saw. From the neck downwards the creature was covered with scales that glittered in the moonlight.

A blackfellow could scarcely have done better ; it is possible indeed that the novelist was indebted to a blackfellow for the description, for it is wonderfully reminiscent of one given to the writer by a blackfellow who was induced, after much persuasion, to enter a pool to capture a wounded wild duck. The exact circumstances were that the blackfellow demanded payment for his services, payment being made in advance and also being made in kind,—rum. The blackfellow swimming wide, a stick was thrown over his head to guide him. Before the splash subsided he was making for the shore at a speed that would have given a new record to the world. Trembling, and as nearly pale as a black skin can become, he staggered out breathlessly to describe the creature he saw rise out of the water to seize him. It was very like the novelist's.

That it was very real to the blackfellow was shown by the fact that nothing would induce him to go into the water again. When the white man, jealous to secure the duck for his camp-kettle, stripped and went in himself, the terror and anguish of

the black was too persistent to have been assumed. Nor was it the only instance when he, one of a race harshly dubbed by cock-sure ignorance as the lowest on the face of the earth, revealed how great and real a thing to him was the creature of his imagination. He told the story of the coal-sack, casually and calmly, until he saw one detail in the story actually occur. He would have spoken of the bunyip in the same way, up to the time the stick splashed beside him. The splash made the story real, and he saw himself a possible victim to the terror of the pool. So was it also when his imagination took a living hold of him even while he was trifling with its power for the amusement of his companion.

Immediately below the lower stars of the group which forms the Southern Cross there is a black patch in the sky, dark, sack-shaped, and mysterious. Scientifically accurate astronomers explain that it is not a patch but rather something which becomes visible by reason of the anomaly that it contains nothing that is visible. The lay mind, preferring bald reality to abstract truth, is somewhat startled to learn that an object is seen because there is nothing in it to see, but no one can dispute the fact; the coal-sack is visible because it contains nothing that is visible. In other words, it is a vast hole in the stellar system in which there is not even a pinch of stellar dust to shed a flicker of luminosity. It is typically and absolutely the quintessence of blackness. Because it is so, and in contradiction of all preconceived notions, the human eye can see it without the aid of telescope or other instrument. Between the stars of the Milky Way there are many little holes in the stellar system,—little by comparison, that is to say—but one must have telescopes and patience to find them. One need only cross the line to the Southern Hemisphere and locate the Southern Cross to see the coal-sack.

With the wealth of legendary tale and fable weaved round the northern stars by the highly gifted races gazing on them through the ages that are gone, one is tempted to speculate what tales would not have been constructed round that fathomless mystery had it appeared north instead of south of the equator. When it rouses the poetical impulse within the brain of aboriginal Australians, what might it not have done with the ancient Greeks, or still more ancient Egyptians? But they were denied it. The aboriginal uses it, as he uses most things, in a topsy-turvy fashion. To him the world is a flat plain crowned with a dome-

shaped roof. When a man dies he has to go up to the roof and slowly journey over it till he can clamber down to the flat again and squeeze through, once more a man. The coal-sack is the hole he goes through to get on to the roof ; and to get up to it is a very long climb. The journey over the roof is also very long, and it is hard to squeeze through when he reaches the flat again. So long does it take that by the time a man has completed the journey, not only his hair, but his skin has grown white with age. Wherefore the blackfellow who has made the journey rejoins his tribe as a whitefellow. Thus it was that when the white man first came to the land the aboriginals regarded him as a long-lost comrade, and objected, even to the point of slaying him, to what they regarded as his forgetfulness and failure to recognise his former comrades, and perchance his wives and offspring also.

In the early days of the settlement there were innumerable instances of this, one of the most remarkable and best authenticated being an experience which befell one of the party under the heroic Sturt who, in 1830, discovered Australia's greatest river, and encountered tribes to whom a white man was an absolute novelty. Yet men of such a tribe set aside their inherent hostility, because they claimed to recognise in one of the explorers (George McLeay) a deceased tribesman. They hailed him as Rundi, and insisted upon his baring his side so that they might see how the wound that slew him had healed.

It is not without significance that this fable of the coal-sack is, like the legends of the boomerang and the bunyip, the property of the aboriginal from end to end of the continent. North, south, east and west, tribes speaking different dialects and mercilessly hostile to one another hold these things in common. One hesitates to ask the questions how and why.

The fable as told by the hero of the bunyip episode was that long ago, very long ago, many blackfellows died and had nowhere to go, because they were neither tall enough to reach, nor strong enough to jump, to the hole in the roof of the world. Two brothers, great hunters and warriors, debated for many days how the problem was to be solved, but never could they agree on a way until, at last, they grew angry one with the other and parted, each with his clubs and spears. The sun was setting when they met again ; by the time it had set there was only one and he sat by his fire, wondering if his brother would find the

way to the roof. He looked up at the hole where it showed in the sky over the tops of the trees. As he looked he heard his brother call out that he had jumped and reached it. "Come and join me," he cried; "come and join me. Here is a rope you can climb." The brother who sat by the fire saw the rope come falling. It fell till it dangled in front of him. He took hold of it and climbed. At the top he met his brother, but before they set out on their journey back to the world again, they tied one end of the rope to a tree and threw down the other end so that others might use it to climb. Everyone who climbs it has to throw down the loose end when he reaches the hole; if he did not carry the end up with him there might be too many on the rope at once and it would break. As it is, there are so many waiting to climb that it is always falling.

Solemnly the blackfellow pointed to the wide stretching band of the Milky Way. It was the route the blackfellows were taking, he explained. All day they travelled, but when night came they camped till the dawn. To keep warm through the night each man made a fire and slept beside it; it was the light of the camp fires that showed in the long wide band. If a man watched carefully he would see how, night after night, the fires moved slowly onward. They were all coming back, all those blackfellows. Many had already come, though, during the long journey, they had grown so old that their skins had grown white as their hair had grown before they climbed the rope. So long had they been journeying that they did not remember that they had not always been white. Everyone seemed to forget that; perhaps he would, too, when the rope fell down for him. He would like to get back a whitefellow. He was a brave warrior, and was not afraid. Nothing could make him afraid, and nothing would make him forget what he was before his skin grew white.

From the depth of the starlit vault overhead, more purple than blue, a shooting star sped gleaming. With a smothered cry, half moan, half wail, the warrior crouched and cowered face downwards to the ground. An offer of rum was unheeded, a pipe of tobacco ignored. Only when the blankets were spread for slumber did the blackfellow raise his head. The shooting star was the rope, he said, and he fancied it was coming to him.

FIRTH SCOTT

THE HOUSE OF MONSIEUR

It may be you remember how the road which runs to the tiny fishing-village of Pontac branches off obstinately a little before reaching it. They say, the ones who know, that the fork was cut in the highway on purpose to puzzle strangers and keep them from finding the way there too easily. At all events no sign-post has ever stood at the crossing to exorcise the devil of indecision in the breasts of travellers. Those whom it concerns know which fork winds across the marsh, crowded with files of whispering sedges, to the house that is called to this day the House of Monsieur.

It is quite empty, now, the little house, and weeds overrun its garden. No one will live there, not the poorest. Yet if you ask why, no one answers, wise heads shake and the mystery remains to you unsolved. The story is simple enough, however,—only sad, yes, very sad. Will you hear it, my friends? Then listen patiently; it is not long.

In the good old days when the English fought the French upon the high seas and beat them, certain of the French prisoners of war were placed upon the island of Guernsey on parole. Each little fishing-town received its quota, nor was Pontac an exception to the general rule.

At first when the Frenchmen appeared there, the Parson, the Parish-Clerk and the congregation of fisherfolk who stood between, questioned about them as villagers will about the stranger and the unfortunate. They were, the prisoners, gentlemen of birth and breeding, for many Frenchmen of good family had enlisted during the recent political crisis as humble soldiers, the better to serve their beloved country. Still, who should fathom, people asked, the conspiracies of their foreign minds? Who should guess the witcheries of their Popish religion? *Sapristi*, for weeks the poor frog-eaters were stared at like flamingoes or penguins!

Notwithstanding, there they were and there they stayed, these

noble foreign gentlemen, and not a whit of trouble did they give to anyone. In accordance with his duties as Justice of the Peace the good Parson marked out the bounds for the prisoners,—Whitby Church to the south, Chalk Cliff Common to the north, and up the valley inland as far as the stream half a mile beyond the fork of the Cross Roads; on the fourth side stretched the blue floor of the sea. These limits the exiles swore one and all upon the Book to respect, and if the course of their walks along the coast at sunset brought them up against one boundary or another they invariably turned sharply round and home again with the look of men who could for their honour's sake cut off their right hands rather than face the world with a stain upon them.

Thus slowly the Parson grew more easy in his mind over his charges, and yet more slowly his respect began to dissipate the cloud of suspicion which hung around them.

Most of the Frenchmen lived in the town in lodgings here or there. One alone out of the number built with his own hands a little house on the road which runs across the marsh studded with cream-cups. The house he built, my friends, is that they call the House of Monsieur. He built it for his young wife, who by some hard-won permission was allowed to share his exile. Monsieur worked hard, very hard at his task, never tiring apparently; all day and every day passers-by found him building and planting while he sang snatches of the gay songs of his country. You see, the flood-tide of love which washes away fatigue was sweeping over his heart.

In spring, when all was ready, she came, the long-desired one. The garden blazed a greeting, the flower-beds burst into welcome. Carnations and sweet peas, four o'clocks and sunflowers, turned their heads to welcome her. She came when the air was heavy with the scent of mignonette, honeysuckle, and roses, that clambered gracefully over the sun-dial which Monsieur, who had a pretty taste for modelling, himself fashioned in quaint design and set among them. A little deputation of the prisoners waited upon her coming, and made speeches of welcome in their gracious tongue.

Mon Dieu, but she was lovely, the wife of Monsieur, tall and white as a lily, her exquisite head set upon her neck with the consummate grace of a flower upon its stalk! Her eyes shone with a wealth of tenderness and beauty and soul, as though the

thin envelope of flesh permitted the light of her calm and tranquil spirit to shine through.

Together she and Monsieur lived in their little house, going seldom enough beyond its glowing garden. Indeed, what need had they to seek contentment abroad since she dwelt so willingly beside them there ?

In happy monotony a summer passed and a winter came,—a winter of bitter winds and heavy snow-flakes fluttering like clumsy white moths to the ground—a winter with forlorn Christmas festivities at the little house of Monsieur where the exiles gathered to speak of pardon and return, once the fighting should be over,—home to *la chère patrie*. For some it was the fog-bound coasts of Brittany, for others the sunshiny splendours of the Midi, for all equally dear.

During the first soft spring days of the new year a strange thing happened. One night Monsieur with the air of a man in a trance went to the Parson and begged him for three days to break the circumscribed parole. Reasons he would give none. The good Parson pressed for them. "Monsieur," said the exile drawing himself up with an air of distress, "you have found me always a man of honour. Is it not so ?" The Parson nodded emphatically. "If, therefore, I say I will return, I *will* return. Is it necessary for me to undergo a catechism, like a truant school-boy, as to my desires, my motives, and my destination ? Is not it already galling enough that I am obliged as a prisoner to ask for the rights of the free earth, to sue for permission to traverse a little corner of the world ?" The voice grew tremulous in its upper notes. As he finished his speech Monsieur walked slowly away with a look of inexpressible sadness. "*Pour la Patrie*, to think how I have loved her and how she has made me suffer !" he murmured to himself. The Parson following and overtaking him laid a light hand on his shoulder : "Go, my friend," he said simply ; "return when it seems good to you." Monsieur gave him a quiet "*Au revoir*," in a voice cloaked like a muffled bell with gratitude.

Early the next morning the exile was gone and Madame apparently also. The little house stood bolted and barred. For three days the flowers ran riot in the garden, overstepping their precise borders shamelessly ; but on the third night the shutters were flung open again and the accustomed lights shone in the windows.

At eight o'clock the exile reported himself to the Parson and found that good man sitting at ease in his kitchen. The cottage door stood ajar for the night was warm. He rose to meet his visitor and would have drawn him in. "*Vous, Monsieur,*" he exclaimed in his kindly joyous manner. "*Voilà!* the Prodigal returned to us. Sit down, sit down. Nancy, bring ale, no, a bottle of red wine. Is it not red wine that you like best, Monsieur?" The Frenchman shook his head. "Nothing to-night, for I must return at once," he said; nor, hearing his unnatural voice and seeing his white face,—*nom de tonnerre*, it was blanched and drawn!—did the Parson attempt further to detain him.

From that night Monsieur was certainly a changed man. All day he sat in his little house leaving it only for his garden at sunset; but Madame never appeared even there. Sometimes the neighbours asked for her and then Monsieur replied always: "She is well but she cares to see no one. We are quite happy,—as we are."

Neither fish nor bread nor butcher's meat did the exile buy, and soon people began to whisper impossible explanations of his seclusion. Foolish tales of hidden treasure gained credence. Monsieur would not buy lest the boy, who delivered purchases at his house, should spy upon him; as for leaving the place himself he would apparently have preferred starvation to such a course. The Parson sent a pint of milk and a pat of butter daily from his dairy to his friend, but apart from that Monsieur and his wife must depend for food upon their garden. Ah, often enough they must have been hungry, these two, shipwrecked upon that little corner of an unfriendly land. And she, the lovely white lily, she must have been brave, of the true blood of France, to live so without quaver or complaint.

Monsieur was doubtless unaware with what fluency the village tongues were beginning to wag in wonder as to how his little household supported life. Suspicion ever follows close on the heels of mystery, and some of the more curious were grown cunning in their curiosity. *Mon Dieu*, they even devised errands up to the Cross Roads, little harmless errands, to be sure, that deceived nobody, least of all the exile himself sitting there in the garden at sunset behind the flourishing neatly trimmed hedge. "*Bonjour, Monsieur,*" the passing neighbour would begin: "*Bonjour,*" he would answer politely, yet with an inflection which made further conversation impossible and usually sent the questioner

right-about-face again. Then Monsieur, left in peace once more, resumed his quiet stare into the faces of the solemn sun-flowers with an intendment which proved how deeply the prospect must have engaged his fancy.

So soon as the fighting was over, the other exiles, who had agitated by great red-sealed documents, began one by one receiving their pardons and slipping away from the discomforts of a foreign land home to their beautiful country. But Monsieur was not among them, and once again winter languidly glided into spring. Still Madame never set her dainty foot across the threshold of the little house. The Parson with tender solicitude ventured to ask if she were ill. "No, not ill," replied Monsieur, "*au contraire*, very well and quite, quite happy. Only, it may be," he added wistfully, "she longs for her own country."

So the dear old Parson, whose mission in life was to further the happiness of others, bestirred himself for Monsieur's pardon. No stone of his influence did he leave unturned; if Monsieur himself was too disheartened to work, he, Monsieur's friend, would try. He wrote to each of the old prisoners begging them to arrange the necessary formalities in France, for that it was only a question of neglected formalities the Parson well knew. Yes, the former exiles replied that they would gladly try for him, *le cher Curé*, so he was affectionately nicknamed, as well as for the sake of their old comrade. And try they did to such good purpose that one day a thick official letter of pardon, sealed with impressive seals, arrived and threw the Parson's modest household into an uproar. There on the shining deal table lay the fruit of his endeavours. The good man was in an ecstasy. "My best surtout, Nancy," said he; "prepare my wig with extra care, and set out my finest frilled shirt, my enamelled snuff-box and my silver-headed cane. I go to present the letter myself." He was as good as his word and set off to walk to the house of Monsieur that very afternoon, whatever emotions he may have felt concealed by the upright carriage and solemn pace proper to a visit of state.

Monsieur, as usual at this hour, sat in his garden. He rose and leaned over the low hedge to speak to the Parson. "*Bon soir, mon cher Curé*," was his affectionate greeting.

"*Bon soir*, my son," and then unable to hold his secret in a moment longer the good old man waved the pompous letter in the air. "The pardon, my son, the pardon! *Allons, soyons gai!*

Do you realise what it means? It means you may go back to France,—to-day—to-morrow—when you will."

"But what if I will not?"

"You will not? You will not? My son, you are surely mad."

"Nevertheless, I will not go back to France, never," repeated the exile.

At this the kind Parson was so righteously provoked that he turned sharply and tramped back to town twice as fast as he had come, the light recurrent tap of his heels as they kissed the hard road sounding long in the exile's ears.

If the Parson nearly lost his patience with Monsieur now, the neighbours had lost theirs with him long ago. When, therefore, lambs began to disappear mysteriously from a farm up the valley just beyond the Cross Roads, where the little house of the exile still persistently stood closed and unfed by any visible means, a gentle wind of suspicion began to blow across it, a gentle wind that shortly increased to a steady gale, yet without Monsieur catching a breath of it. Then presently the townspeople became determined on one of two courses; either the Parson in his capacity of Justice of the Peace should search the suspected cottage or they would search it themselves. A committee of them waited upon the Parson to tell him so. The good man reasoned with them; one lamb, he allowed, Monsieur might take for food—but twenty! They obstinately refused to listen to this argument. Finally he endeavoured to impress upon them that courtesy forbade him to intrude upon the prisoner's privacy. "Either you search or we search," said the men doggedly, and the Parson was reluctantly obliged to promise he would go.

So once again at the sunset hour he trudged off to the house of Monsieur, but this time sick at heart. Once again Monsieur sat in his garden. Impulsively, as he saw the Parson coming, he rose and leaned over the hedge.

"Oh, *Monsieur le Curé*," he said, "forgive me yesterday, forgive me! I have been ungrateful to you, my only friend, forgive me. I seemed to you obstinate, but oh, believe me, *Monsieur le Curé*, I cannot go; there are reasons——"

"Of course, of course, my son. I forgive, without understanding," said the old man soothingly. He hastened to change the subject to one less agitating. "Your flowers are *très en fête* to-day; your mignonette is sweet—as sweet as nothing in the

world except itself. And your lilies"—a bed of pure white ones rose together in a corner of the garden which the Parson could see over the hedge.

"Yes, the lilies are beautiful," said Monsieur sadly; "those I love best. They are fine and pure,—*n'est ce pas?*"

Very gently, almost with the tenderness of a mother urging her child to do something for its own good, the Parson led the talk around from the garden to the matter of the house, and told his errand to Monsieur.

The exile flared up at once like a torch. "They doubt me? They require the sordid proof of the eyes when they can for the asking have my word? *C'est une infamie!* They would force my house and pry and search." He clenched his hands. "Is it known in this country, the *parole d'honneur*, say, *Monsieur le Curé*, is it known? They have found these foolish excuses in order to probe my secrets. *C'est ça.* The town is curious, the town must know; I am one while they are many, the *canaille*; therefore they will come and walk into my house and see. Ah, but *Monsieur le Curé*, they can see; they can see first the point of my sword to greet them in the doorway, and then, when the point is dulled, over my body, they can see the rest. Go back and tell them so."

The Frenchman spoke in a passion of fury and outraged feeling. With a gentle movement the old man laid a soothing touch upon his hand.

"Listen, dear friend," he said: "it is only I who need see, I, because—because, *mon Dieu*, I happen to be Justice of the Peace. If you refuse me entrance, the others will come; you will refuse them also, forcibly, and there will be blood spilled, the blood of the old-time enemies with whom your country has been at such pains to make peace. Besides, since you have refused your pardon, you are still on *parole*, still on your word of honour to behave as a peaceful, law-abiding citizen. Monsieur, think over it well; *il faut jamais déshonorer la patrie.*"

Monsieur sank his head between his hands in a gesture of utter despair. It was long before he answered "*C'est vrai, Monsieur le Curé; faut jamais déshonorer la patrie.* If you will follow me," and he led the way to the little white garden-gate. Carefully he unlocked it and the Parson entered a miniature *allée verte* of neatly trimmed shrubs. Together the two friends walked up the narrow path where for a year no feet but Monsieur's had

trodden ; together they went into the little hall of the cottage ; Monsieur turned and put his hand upon the door of the room to the right. "I will show you, *mon ami*," he said, "the simple mystery of my life, the foolish childish delusion that has gladdened; these many months, the heart of a lonely man."

He flung open the door. The blinds were half down ; a soft rosy light, the light of sunset, the light of illusion, flooded the room. It was a woman's room ; a woman's little treasures rested on the tables, and upon a sofa near the windows, beautiful as ever but fragile and pale and delicate as the lilies growing in the garden, lay Monsieur's wife.

The Curé advanced with old-fashioned courtesy. "It is long since I had the honour of kissing Madame's hand," he said.

But Monsieur threw a detaining look towards him, and then straightway burst into a flood of laughter, such laughter as it is pain to hear, laughter compounded from the devil's recipe, of bitterness and irony, pain and anguish, agony and despair. It struck the kind old man with a rude shock. "My son, what will Madame think ? That we make merry at her expense, or else at some vulgar incident in which her gentle ears can have no part," he said anxiously, turning to observe the effect on her of this singular outburst.

"Madame thinks nothing, hears nothing, sees nothing, knows nothing," replied Monsieur bitterly going over to where she lay. "Madame is wax, see, wax, body and soul. *Voila mon secret, bien bête n'est ce pas, Monsieur le Curé ?* She, my white lily, died just a year ago, faded in the pale sunshine of this accursed country. I buried her myself near the flowers she so dearly loved, and when they bloom, to me it seems as if her soul too blossoms. Ah, but those first lonely days were sad, sad grey beads slipping along the interminable rosary of the years. For a little while I thought I must die ; sometimes only the *parole* kept me from killing myself. At last this idea came to me. I asked three days' leave of you. I bought materials and brought them here ; then with my own hands I made this statue. As you see it is perfect, perfect ; only the breath of life is needed. *Mon Dieu*, I have prayed for that to the Holy Virgin and to all the Saints and Martyrs, every one ! But the day of miracles is past. My prayers are not answered ; only sometimes in the merciful twilight or the sweet candlelight I have thought, I have half believed, that my *lys*

blanche was there with me again. *Monsieur le Curé*, I have guarded the house as a miser his gold, as a good woman her lips, because,—because I could not bear the comments, the sympathy of the neighbours, if they should know. I could not bear to speak of my loss; there are natures so made, dear friend, to lock up their joys and troubles. You can see now why I was obliged to refuse the pardon. *Monsieur le Curé*, my grief is sacred to me; it is my life, my love, my religion."

"And so it shall remain, my son," answered the old Parson, profoundly moved at the sight of the younger man's pitiful grief. "I swear no one shall know of it. And now I must take my departure. My mission is fulfilled and little brightness is left which the twilight has not claimed. Before the darkness I must go. God bless you, my son! May time suck the bitterness out of your trouble like poison from a wound."

"Yes, go, dear, dear friend, leave me; for sometimes in the kindly hour of twilight, when the lilies shine with a ghostly radiance, I can still fancy she is with me."

FLODDEN FIELD

FLODDEN and Bannockburn unquestionably represent for the average Englishman the two great Anglo-Scottish conflicts of history. The dozen or so of decisive battles on a more or less similar scale that intervened between 1319 and 1513 are only remembered by the historically inclined and a certain proportion of Scotsmen ; indeed the average Southron is quite justified in his unconscious discrimination, for both battles had a prodigious effect on the Northern nation. Bannockburn confirmed as it were its spirit of defiant independence ; Flodden, though not followed up by the victors, almost broke its spirit, cruelly lacerated its pride, and according to most Scottish writers retarded its natural progress, then greatly developing, for a hundred years. The former was fought upon a great issue, that of national independence ; the latter was provoked by the losers on almost as trifling pretexts as any Douglas or Percy raid. Even the military conscience of the Scots themselves, outside their King and his French friends, was a little pricked by the wantonness and futility of the exploit, and the bitterness of defeat was further aggravated by the absence of sufficient motive for the sacrifice.

Scots and English had inflicted on one another disasters more complete and bloody than Flodden, and followed by much greater ravage ; for the fight at Braxton was in character almost that of a gigantic tourney, at the close of which the combatants parted and went home. But what distinguishes Flodden above all other northern battles lies in the fact that the King of Scotland, with the flower of his nobility, was left dead upon the field, while the English loss was relatively small and included scarcely any notables. That the wail throughout Scotland after Flodden was longer and louder than any of like kind in her history has always been an accepted axiom, and is dwelt on with much cherished sentiment by all her later chroniclers, for there was no stampede of the main column from Braxton slope. Bitter no doubt as was the national

humiliation for the moment, historically speaking the incident is one rather of pathos and pride, in that James and his nobles fell fighting against the odds into which bad generalship and partial misconduct had converted a numerically inferior foe. The memory of Flodden and its details is still evergreen among Scotsmen and English Borderers who care for the past, while *MARMION* has of course helped to keep the general public from forgetting it. Most of us have assuredly been wont to regard Bannockburn and Flodden as a sort of incompleated rubber upon which the two countries shook hands. The impression survives even some more intimate acquaintance with the three or four centuries of savage strife which characterised Anglo-Scottish relations. Nor does any particle of bitterness remain either to Scotsmen or Englishmen in the memory of their appalling wars. A number of crushing victories and some ignominious stampedes stand to the account of either. But all at any rate ended happily and honours were divided. As regards the actual Borderers, their ceaseless private feuds bred a kind of freemasonry among them, and in a big fight on purely national lines they were not always to be trusted to act as strenuously against each other as in a cattle-raid.

Even if Flodden with its bloody incidents and dramatic issue were not a matter of sustained interest to Scottish writers and antiquaries, the scene of the conflict keeps its memory green enough by the conspicuous fashion in which it dominates so wide an extent of storied landscape on both sides of the Tweed. An outlying spur of the Cheviots, the high green ridge known as Flodden Edge, its southern slope draped in woods, rises some five hundred feet above the Till, which sullen river comes winding with extraordinary contortions out of the heart of Northumberland to its feet, and so onward to the Tweed five miles away.

In a recent monograph on Border ballads Colonel Elliot has dealt with Flodden Field in regard to its effect on Scotland from a somewhat fresh point of view.¹ He combats the time-honoured notion that the Scottish Borderers, the men of Selkirk, Roxburgh, and the Merse, were heavy sufferers, and brings much evidence in support of his view. He contests, though not of course alone in this, the general idea that the battle ended in a regular rout ;

¹ *THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF BORDER BALLADS*; by Lt.-Col. the Honble. Fitzwilliam Elliot.

indeed one of the English contemporary ballads scoffs, and no doubt with justice, at certain Scotsmen who refuse to recognise it even as a defeat. Still the mysterious procedure of the undefeated and little damaged left wing of the Scots, containing, according to Colonel Elliot, most of the Borderers, is always an obstacle to the theory of a crushing victory. The author deals with the famous and pathetic ballad of his relative Jean Elliot, *THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST*, which all Scotsmen, headed by Sir Walter, like to interpret as a wail over the fallen manhood of Selkirk Forest, in a manner somewhat disconcerting to this charming and cherished tradition.

But the ballad controversy is altogether too technical for these scant pages. I pass rather to Flodden Field and stand again in fancy as I have stood in fact several times of late on Branxton ridge where the battle was actually fought, and venture on some brief account of that immortal conflict and the events preceding it. It was on August 22nd, 1513, that James the Fourth with a considerable portion at least of that enormous army of a hundred thousand men which had rallied to his call at Edinburgh, crossed the Tweed at Norham some seven miles from Flodden. I have suggested that his whole procedure was a wanton one, though perhaps the term is inapplicable to the period. It was a time of truce, but his brother-in-law, Henry the Eighth of England, was besieging Terouenne in France with his main army, and the temptation was very great; for James had grievances, though comparatively trifling ones, and was personally sore. His favourite sea-captain Andrew Barton, a gallant fellow, had like all his kind played the buccaneer at the expense of some English merchant-ships among others, for which offence the Howards had hunted him down and killed him on the open sea as a pirate. A more trifling grievance of old standing was the murder of a Scottish by an English Borderer, one Heron the Bastard, with ensuing complications; a picturesque incident in Flodden literature but of no international importance whatsoever, and in any case settled to the best of Henry's power. Lastly the French Queen had sent James a ring begging him as a gallant warrior to make a diversion into England on her behalf. James was romantic as well as valiant, and there were moreover Frenchmen at his elbow urging him for their own obvious reasons to his tragic and unexpected fate.

After easily capturing the castles of Norham, Etal, and Ford,

James sat down with his whole army, shrunk by desertion to perhaps fifty or sixty thousand men, but well victualled and well found, on the long bare ridge of Flodden. Away to the north, over the winding course of Tweed shining conspicuously in the foreground, they could see from hence all over the Merse to the dim line of the Lammermuirs. Immediately behind them on the west the Cheviots lay piled up in massive heaps fronted by the bare hill of Humbleton where a century ago Hotspur's Welsh archers had played utter havoc with the Douglas's mailed host and incidentally created the situation which brought on the battle of Shrewsbury.¹ Southward the Scots could look far up the narrow flat valley of the Till, now fertile meadows, then waving in yellow broom, and for that reason the scene of frequent Border fights and ambuscades. Immediately below the hill, and across the Till, now swollen from continuous rain, lay Ford Castle. Its fair chatelaine, Mistress Heron, by a cherished but baseless tradition, was the cause of the susceptible James's dalliance. If so he proved an ungallant lover, for he plundered her castle after accepting her forced hospitality. The real cause of delay was doubtless the reluctance of his nobles to further prosecute an unpopular adventure, though James declared that there was no one left to defend England but "millers and mass priests." The situation was curiously like that of Neville's Cross when Edward the Third was at Crecy, and the result precisely the same.

In the meantime Surrey, left in charge of England, had collected his levies from the eight northern counties, including the whole Stanley following, at Newcastle. By September 2nd he was at Alnwick, and on the 7th was encamped with thirty thousand men on Wooler Haugh, six miles distant from but in full view of Flodden. Hence he sent heralds to James challenging him to descend from his hill "more like a castle" and fight him in the open "on Friday." James, professing anger at being thus addressed by an inferior, refused admittance to his envoys, but nevertheless seems to have held himself pledged in honour to meet "the auld crooked carle" Surrey on or about the day proposed. His older chiefs wisely counselled a retreat to Scotland, but the chivalrous and reckless King utterly refused such a suggestion even to insulting the aged Angus (Bell-the-cat), who went home in dudgeon leaving his two sons to die with the rest.

¹ Bates's HISTORY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

In the meantime, the English at Wooler Haugh, soaked by the continuous rain, short of provisions and drinking muddy water, had no time to lose. On the 8th, Surrey marched his force by the predecessor of the present bridge at Doddington across the Till, that sullen little red-banked river, purling from deep to deep with the old familiar refrain that it can "droon sax men while Tweed droons twa." Thence the army moved on to Barmoor and camped for the night. They were now about four miles to the north-east of Flodden and the Scots, who imagined them to be on the march for Berwick; but the next sun that rose was to set on the carnage of Flodden. The long hours before the battle are ones of intense interest and a subject of much discussion. The Till flowed a winding course northward of some six miles between the armies to the Tweed, and Flodden ridge fell with a mile-long slope to its banks at Ford. The English at Barmoor were three miles beyond the Till hidden by another ridge.

Much has been written of the masterly and daring strategy with which Surrey threw his guns and vanguard forward to Twizell bridge and with his main body crossed the Till at some uncertain point, but as we think at Sandyford, which in the height of the recent June (1907) rains was apparently little more than waist-deep. Ford, a long mile above, was doubtless guarded by Scottish guns; but the other was out of sight both of Ford and of Flodden Hill, the Scots upon which, it must be remembered, had been deceived into the notion that Surrey on breaking camp at Barmoor was in full march for Berwick. Moreover, Branxton Marsh, then an effective barrier to all action, ran a two-mile course here from the westward to the river joining it just below Sandyford, so that Surrey, after the passage, was on the right side of it for the march to his ultimate position at Branxton village. Many writers have made the crossing of the marsh one of Surrey's difficulties with both divisions. This seems superfluous, as from Sandyford to Branxton an army could have marched with ease beneath a sheltering ridge, and unperceived by the Scots, to the field of battle.¹ The vanguard could have marched to Twizell with still less chance of discovery, and on their return to the appointed tryst at Branxton

¹ Whether upon this morning any of the Scottish guns had been pushed forward to actually command any passages of the Till, and if so at what points, is a matter of uncertainty and contention.

need not have shown themselves till they topped the slope just to the north of it. Nor approaching from this direction need they and their guns present any difficulty as to the passage of the march, for it would have been a simple matter to pass round its head, which did not reach the rear of what was to be the English right wing. It was a master-stroke, and by skill or luck well-timed, for the Scots obviously suspected nothing till they saw Surrey's two divisions in the act of uniting to the south of the marsh, now a narrow line of meadows threaded by a burn. It seems certain that many historians dealing with Flodden have either never visited the field, or else have contented themselves with a general view of it from the last Scottish position at Branxton ridge, a point that would not disclose the many physical complications which influenced Surrey's tactics.

A battle was now inevitable, for the Scottish retreat was cut off. The English, already gathering at the further foot of Branxton ridge, would obviously seize that position, almost as high a one as Flodden and within a short mile of it. Setting fire therefore to his camp-refuse and under the cover, it is said, of the smoke, King James moved his army to this more advanced ridge on whose broad northward slope the battle was to be fought. It must by now have been past four o'clock. The English were gathering along the foot of the hill in order of battle on the line of the present hamlet of Branxton, which probably marks their centre. The men were wet, ill-fed, and had been on the move all day. There was no love between the Howards and the Stanleys, and the Lancashire levies grumbled loudly at being put under the command of the former on the right wing. Surrey's fighting force seems to have been actually less than thirty thousand; that of James is much more difficult to estimate, forty thousand being the lowest quotation known to me, and probably the most accurate one.

The English at the foot of the half-mile slope were now fronting nearly south with the wind in their faces, while a heavy shower had damped their bow-strings. They could not have had much time to form, and seem to have gone into action gradually from right to left. At the former station was Edmund Howard with three thousand Cheshire and Lancashire men. Next came his brother the Admiral with nine thousand from Durham, Yorkshire, and Northumberland. Further on was Sir Marmaduke Constable with three thousand more from the same

counties. Then came Surrey with a larger body, while Stanley led the left wing with five thousand of his own people. Dacre in the meanwhile with a thousand horse, from the Cumbro-Northumbrian borderland, and some Bamburgh and Tyne-mouth foot, was in reserve on the right.

After a brief artillery duel, the Scottish left, composed of Border spearmen and Gordon Highlanders ten thousand strong under Lords Home and Huntley, charged down on Edmund Howard's weak force and threw it into a confusion only to be stayed by Dacre's prompt support. This took place where the broad breast of Branxton hill dips and then with scarcely perceptible descent extends towards a narrow glen that flanks it on the far west. The combatants were therefore below the ridge and probably out of sight of the main battle. This alone may explain what is the abiding mystery of Flodden, ten thousand choice and practically victorious troops, that is to say, remaining out of action and within a few hundred yards, while the rest of their army was being cut to pieces or routed. It seems most probable that they really did not know what had happened till it was too late. Home was of course blamed, and a well known couplet girds at him, but serious critics have practically exonerated the Chamberlain, even in the face of the mystery such acquittance involves. It is said that a messenger brought the news of the King's danger and urged his support, and that Home replied that he had done his duty successfully and the King might do likewise; even this is held as rather signifying his incredulity that such serious things were being done. As one stands above Branxton Church on the considerable knoll known as Piper's Hill behind which Home's force must have been standing idle, and then looks across to the vicarage, the reputed spot of James's fall, but a few hundred yards distant, the blunder seems incredible; yet one must accept it, and by way of explanation endeavour to picture the utter confusion presented by some forty thousand men fighting hand to hand within so narrow a compass, unless we consider the other alternative, namely, that the Scottish left wing being Borderers and Highlanders in the midst of a short critical battle had dispersed to plunder. For the Admiral Howard with his strong division had met one of about equal strength under Crawford and had broken it, calling loudly himself on the King, who had often taunted him for keeping out of his reach on the high seas. King James in the meantime, with the largest column of all near the centre of the Scottish

line, had noticed Home's success or perhaps Crawford's failure, and, impetuous soul that he was, could stand still no longer. It had been before said of James that he was a bad captain because he began to fight before he gave his orders.¹ Leaping from off his horse, pulling off his boots, seizing a lance and shield, and surrounded by his nobles, who did likewise, the fiery King ran headlong down against Surrey's column that confronted him. Then ensued that tremendous and bloody hurly-burly of at least thirty thousand men mostly on foot, barons, knights, squires, and common soldiers, that has made Flodden Fight so memorable. Anything might now have turned the tide of battle either way. Home and his Borderers and Highlanders all unconscious, we must suppose, but surely unadventurous in the broad flat hollow beyond, might well have converted it into something like a Bannockburn. But it was to be turned the other way by Stanley with half Home's numbers. The battle on the English left wing and on the east and steeper part of the ridge was as brief and much more decisive than that upon the right. Sir Edward Stanley "stiff in stour" with his five thousand Cheshire and Lancashire men, mainly archers, was confronted by a cloud of ten thousand Highlanders and men of the Isles under Argyle and Lennox. The English seem to have taken the offensive and charged up the hill slippery with recent rains, having first, like the Scottish centre, pulled off their boots. Famous archers here met undisciplined Highlanders, whom the first discharge stung into an ill-organised rush, while succeeding volleys broke and routed them and sent them flying over the hill to be seen no more. Stanley and his men having thus won the top of Branxton ridge, as they gathered breath, saw below them on the right the mighty and doubtful conflict raging around the royal banners. Unscathed and still fresh they reformed on the hill slope and bore down with their whole might on the Scottish rear. This was the beginning of the end. The enveloped Scots, as everyone knows, fought desperately around their King. Even yet, having regard to the numbers on both sides, and the ancient martial equality of these two northern breeds, it is not easy to account for such an utter overthrow of one of them. We know that Home's left wing and Argyle's ten thousand Highlanders were out of action; but by the lowest calculations of the Scottish army, for the English strength is known, there should still have been no very great disparity. Dacre's horsemen, hardy raiders from

¹ Sir George Douglas's HISTORY OF PEEBLES, ROXBURGH, AND SELKIRKSHIRE.

Alston and the Irthing valley, the only cavalry still engaged, may have been especially effective, and probably Stanley's archers could still use their bows.

It was all over by dark and the flower of the Scottish nobility soon lay naked corpses around their dead King, stripped as naked as they. The Scottish loss is variously estimated at from four thousand to seventeen thousand. It was not the numbers, however, but the quality for which Scotland chiefly mourned, and the roll of her illustrious dead at any rate is no guess-work. The English loss is always stated as infinitely less, and included few men of note since the army contained few, for obvious reasons. Indeed one argument advanced on Flodden Hill by the Scottish leaders for declining a battle, was the social inferiority as a whole of their enemy. It sounds strange enough to us, but these valiant noblemen were perfectly honest, and thought it unfitting that the best blood of Scotland should expend itself for no definite cause in a fight where they would meet chiefly churls and yeomen, just as a duellist might hesitate to meet a man of lower degree on a dubious pretext. King James fell pierced with many wounds, and though not disfigured his body could not be found and identified till the following day ; and it seems hard that the embalmed corpse of so brave and gallant a king should have been tossed about unburied in lumber-rooms, as was this one, like a discarded piece of furniture, generations afterwards. Catherine of Arragon sent his bloody coat to Henry in France "to make a banner," and indeed she had busied herself greatly in the hasty preparations for Flodden, even working flags with her own hand.

The battle could scarcely have lasted three hours. The English camped on the field and Home's division, extraordinary as it seems, also camped on the edge of it and even hung about during the next day. The rest of the Scottish army, in scattered bands, recrossed the Tweed. Scottish writers have generally insisted that Flodden let loose hordes of English raiders upon the Border, which, stripped by the slaughter of its natural defenders, suffered sorely. Colonel Elliot claims that the Borderers suffered hardly at all in the battle, and remarks with perfect truth that the English army disbanded immediately after it and went home. The harryings and burnings usually pictured as the aftermath of Flodden, he can only suppose are the result of confusion with the very real misery brought on Scotland by the invasion under Lord Hertford seventeen years later. He is

even inclined to discount the cherished tradition that the death of so many leaders was ruinous to Scotland, or that half of the country lay untilled for the slaughter of her manhood. The real disaster of Flodden was the death of James, which might as readily have occurred in a victory. It was not that he was a great king, but his personal charm had for once united all the incongruous elements that made up his loosely knit kingdom to the advantage of internal peace and material progress. But above all he was succeeded by a minor, with the result, inevitable in ancient Scotland, of faction and chaos.

Profound peace now reigns on Flodden Hill and its outlying rampart of Branxton ridge. A narrow belt of big beech trees follows the latter where the Scottish line must have formed up and watched Surrey's columns mustering on the near side of the marsh a thousand yards below. When last I stood there a great breadth of turnips was flickering on the slope down which the Scottish plumps of spears moved slowly forward to the final position, and the last stooks of barley were being led from Piper's Hill, to the west of which that first shock was delivered which broke young Edmund Howard's column. Spectacularly it is a perfect battle-field, a long half mile only from position to position and a mile perhaps in width. The little church which backed the English right centre is still there, though much rebuilt. The more broken slope away on the Scottish right up which Stanley's archers drove the Highlanders in confusion is cut up into somewhat smaller fields, while the vicarage, isolated and conspicuous, by general agreement roughly marks the death-place of the Scottish King. Just below the church, by the roadside, the spring is still used which would certainly have laved the lips of the dying Marmion. Most visitors that come here, I gather, prefer Marmion to Flodden, and not being over critical scale the wooded end of Flodden edge, to see the Sybil's well, at which utterly impossible situation modern enterprise with an elaborate inscription has deposited the dying hero. Sir Walter himself takes some topographical liberties in his splendid stanzas; chiefly perhaps in his picture of the Scots on Flodden Hill watching Surrey's column defile over Twizel Bridge, which is at least five miles distant as the crow flies and entirely hidden from view.

A. G. BRADLEY

ath
the
The
as
is a
the
to
But
ble

ing
ees
up
the
reat
the
osi-
er's
ich
is a
ion
ked
ilt.
ich
up
and
ace
de,
lips
ner,
the
ich
ate
self
efly
ing
ive